

Following the Master



*Lessons for Disciples
From the Gospel of Mark*

J. Paul Tanner

Following the Master

*Lessons for Disciples
From the Gospel of Mark*

Following the Master; Lessons for Disciples from the Gospel of Mark

© 2017 J. Paul Tanner

Every attempt has been made to provide correct information. However, the publisher does not guarantee the accuracy of the book and does not assume responsibility for information included in or omitted from it.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NET Bible®, ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.bible.org. All rights reserved. This material is available in its entirety as a free download or online web use at <http://net.bible.org>. Scripture quotations marked as NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

All rights reserved. This publication is protected by copyright, and except for brief excerpts for review purposes, permission must be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise.

For information regarding permissions or special orders, please contact:

Dr. J. Paul Tanner

23262 CR 181

Bullard, TX 75757

Email: drtanner@beeworld.org

ISBN:

Second Edition: FollMast_En_Let_2017.10.27

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

[10/27/2017]

Contents

COURSE INTRODUCTION	11
Reasons for Taking This Course	11
Course Objectives	12
About the Author	12
Course Organization	12
Units of Study	12
Lesson Organization	13
Student Instructions	14
Map of Palestine in the Time of Jesus Christ	16
UNIT ONE: Jesus' Early Galilean Ministry (Mark 1:1--6:6a)	
Unit Outline	17
Unit Objectives	17
LESSON ONE: The Beginnings of Jesus' Public Ministry (Mark 1:1-45)	
Lesson Introduction	18
Lesson Outline	18
Lesson Objectives	18
Topic 1 -- Jesus' Forerunner in John the Baptist (1:1-8)	19
Topic 2 -- Jesus' Baptism and Temptation by Satan (1:9-13)	20
Topic 3 -- The Kingdom Message and Call of the Four Fishermen (1:14-20)	21
Topic 4 -- Jesus' Healing and Exorcism Ministry at Capernaum (1:21-39)	22
Topic 5 -- Cleansing of a Leper (1:40-45)	23
Lesson 1 Self Check	25
Lesson 1 Answers to Questions	27
Lesson 1 Self Check Answers	30

LESSON TWO: Early Controversies with Jewish Religious Leaders (Mark 2:1--3:6)

Lesson Introduction	31
Lesson Outline	31
Lesson Objectives	31
Topic 1 -- Healing the Paralytic and Forgiving Sins (2:1-12)	32
Topic 2 -- The Call of Matthew and Eating With “Sinners” (2:13-17)	34
Topic 3 -- Challenged About Fasting (2:18-22)	35
Topic 4 -- Sabbath Controversies: Eating Grain on a Sabbath (2:23-28)	37
Topic 5 -- Sabbath Controversies: Healing on a Sabbath (3:1-6)	38
Lesson 2 Self Check	40
Lesson 2 Answers to Questions	42
Lesson 2 Self Check Answers	44

LESSON THREE: Staunch Rejection by Jewish Leaders Followed by Kingdom Parables (Mark 3:7--4:34)

Lesson Introduction	45
Lesson Outline	45
Lesson Objectives	45
Topic 1 -- Withdrawal to Galilee and Appointment of the Twelve (3:7-19)	46
Topic 2 -- The Beelzebul Accusation and Jesus’ Identification of His True Family (3:20-35)	47
Topic 3 -- Parables About the Kingdom: Part 1 (4:1-20)	49
Topic 4 -- Parables About the Kingdom: Part 2 (4:21-34)	51
Lesson 3 Self Check	53
Lesson 3 Answers to Questions	55
Lesson 3 Self Check Answers	57

LESSON FOUR: Jesus’ Miracles Demonstrating His Sovereign Power (Mark 4:35--6:6a)

Lesson Introduction	58
Lesson Outline	59
Lesson Objectives	59
Topic 1 -- Calming the Storm at Sea (4:35-41)	59

Topic 2 -- Encounter and Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)	60
Topic 3 -- The Miracle with Jairus's Daughter--The Synagogue Official (5:21-43)	61
Topic 4 -- Conclusion: Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth (6:1-6a)	65
Lesson 4 Self Check	67
Lesson 4 Answers to Questions	69
Lesson 4 Self Check Answers	72
Unit 1 Exam: Following the Master	73
UNIT TWO: The Conclusion to Jesus' Galilean Ministry and Final Journey to Jerusalem (Mark 6:6b--10:52)	
Unit Outline	77
Unit Objectives	77
LESSON FIVE: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part I (Mark 6:6b--56)	
Lesson Introduction	79
Lesson Outline	79
Lesson Objectives	79
Topic 1 -- Sending Out of the Twelve into Galilee (6:6b-13)	80
Topic 2 -- The Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)	81
Topic 3 -- The Feeding of the 5000 (6:30-44)	84
Topic 4 -- Jesus with the Disciples in the Boat: Walks on Water (6:45-52)	85
Topic 5 -- Healings Near Gennesaret (6:53-56)	86
Lesson 5 Self Check	88
Lesson 5 Answers to Questions	90
Lesson 5 Self Check Answers	93
LESSON SIX: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part II (Mark 7:1--8:30)	
Lesson Introduction	94
Lesson Outline	94
Lesson Objectives	94

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Confrontation with the Scribes and Pharisees: Traditions and True Defilement (7:1-23)	95
Topic 2 -- The Faith of the Syrophoenician Woman (7:24-30)	96
Topic 3 -- The Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man (7:31-37)	99
Topic 4 -- The Feeding of the 4000 (8:1-10)	100
Topic 5 -- The Pharisees' Request for a Sign (8:11-13)	101
Topic 6 -- Warning of Leaven and Jesus' Rebuke of the Disciples' Lack of Understanding (8:14-21)	101
Topic 7 -- The Opening of the Blind Man's Eyes at Bethsaida (8:22-26)	102
Topic 8 -- Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-30)	103
Lesson 6 Self Check	105
Lesson 6 Answers to Questions	107
Lesson 6 Self Check Answers	110
LESSON SEVEN: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part I (Mark 8:31--9:29)	
Lesson Introduction	111
Lesson Outline	111
Lesson Objectives	111
Topic 1 -- The First Major Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (8:31-33)	111
Topic 2 -- Requirements of a True Disciple (8:34--9:1)	112
Topic 3 -- The Transfiguration of Jesus in Kingdom Glory (9:2-8)	114
Topic 4 -- The Coming of Elijah Explained (9:9-13)	116
Topic 5 -- The Healing of a Boy Possessed by an Evil Spirit (9:14-29)	118
Lesson 7 Self Check	120
Lesson 7 Answers to Questions	122
Lesson 7 Self Check Answers	125
LESSON EIGHT: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part II (Mark 9:30--10:12)	
Lesson Introduction	126
Lesson Outline	126
Lesson Objectives	126

Topic 1 -- The Second Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (9:30-32)	126
Topic 2 -- Lesson for the Disciples on True Greatness (9:33-37)	127
Topic 3 -- Driving Out Demons in Jesus' Name (9:38-42)	128
Topic 4 -- The Demanding Requirements of Discipleship (9:43-50)	129
Topic 5 -- Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (10:1-12)	130
Lesson 8 Self Check	134
Lesson 8 Answers to Questions	136
Lesson 8 Self Check Answers	139
LESSON NINE: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part III (Mark 10:13-52)	
Lesson Introduction	140
Lesson Outline	140
Lesson Objectives	140
Topic 1 -- Blessing of the Children (10:13-16)	141
Topic 2 -- The Rich Man's Question about Inheriting Eternal Life (10:17-31)	141
Topic 3 -- The Third Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (10:32-34)	146
Topic 4 -- The Request of James and John for Places of Honor (10:35-45)	146
Topic 5 -- The Faith of Blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)	147
Lesson 9 Self Check	149
Lesson 9 Answers to Questions	151
Lesson 9 Self Check Answers	154
Unit 2 Exam: Following the Master	155
UNIT THREE: The Final Week in Jerusalem (Mark 11:1--16:20)	
Unit Outline	160
Unit Objectives	160
LESSON TEN: Jesus' Arrival at Jerusalem and the Challenge of the Religious Leaders (Mark 11:1--12:34)	
Lesson Introduction	161
Lesson Outline	161
Lesson Objectives	161

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11)	161
Topic 2 -- Jesus' Prophetic Signs of God's Judgment on Israel (11:12-26)	163
Topic 3 -- Jesus' Controversy with the Jewish Religious Leaders in the Temple Courts (11:27--12:34)	165
Lesson 10 Self Check	172
Lesson 10 Answers to Questions	174
Lesson 10 Self Check Answers	177
LESSON ELEVEN: Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders and the Olivet Discourse (Mark 12:35--13:37)	
Lesson Introduction	178
Lesson Outline	178
Lesson Objectives	178
Topic 1 -- Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders (12:35-44)	179
Topic 2 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 1: Warnings for the Future (13:1-23)	180
Topic 3 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 2: Christ's Second Coming (13:24-27)	186
Topic 4 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 3: Parables and Lessons on Staying Alert (13:28-37)	187
EXCURSUS: Jesus' Not Knowing the "Day and Hour" of His Coming	189
Lesson 11 Self Check	191
Lesson 11 Answers to Questions	194
Lesson 11 Self Check Answers	196
LESSON TWELVE: The Betrayal of Jesus and the Final Passover Meal (Mark 14:1-52)	
Lesson Introduction	197
Lesson Outline	197
Lesson Objectives	197
Topic 1 -- The Plot to Seize Jesus (14:1-2)	197
Topic 2 -- The Anointing at Bethany (14:3-9)	198
Topic 3 -- The Betrayal by Judas (14:10-11)	199
Topic 4 -- Preparation of the Final Passover Meal (14:12-16)	200
Topic 5 -- The Lord's Passover Meal (14:17-26)	200

Topic 6 -- The Prediction of Peter's Denial (14:27-31)	203
Topic 7 -- The Agony of Gethsemane (14:32-42)	203
Topic 8 -- The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (14:43-52)	204
Lesson 12 Self Check	206
Lesson 12 Answers to Questions	208
Lesson 12 Self Check Answers	211
LESSON THIRTEEN: Jesus' Trials and His Humiliation (Mark 14:53--15:20)	
Lesson Introduction	212
Lesson Outline	212
Lesson Objectives	212
Topic 1 -- Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65)	213
Topic 2 -- Peter's Denial of Jesus (14:66-72)	217
Topic 3 -- The Trial Before Pilate (15:1-15)	218
Topic 4 -- The Mocking of Jesus (15:16-20)	220
Lesson 13 Self Check	221
Lesson 13 Answers to Questions	223
Lesson 13 Self Check Answers	226
LESSON FOURTEEN: Jesus' Crucifixion on the Cross and His Resurrection (Mark 15:21--16:20)	
Lesson Introduction	227
Lesson Outline	227
Lesson Objectives	227
Topic 1 -- The Crucifixion (15:21-32)	228
Topic 2 -- The Death of Jesus (15:33-41)	230
Topic 3 -- The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)	233
Topic 4 -- Jesus' Resurrection Appearance to the Women at the Tomb (16:1-8)	234
Topic 5 -- The Conclusion to Mark's Gospel (16:9-20)	235
Lesson 14 Self Check	237
Lesson 14 Answers to Questions	239

Lesson 14 Self Check Answers	242
------------------------------	-----

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Gospel of Mark – Introductory Matters	247
Appendix 2: Answers to the Unit Exams	252
Appendix 3: Book Chart of the Gospel of Mark	256

Following the Master: Lessons for Disciples from the Gospel of Mark

Course Introduction

The pages of history have been filled with heroes . . . some great military strategists, some builders of great civilizations, some who have accomplished daring feats, and some who have been blessed with sheer brilliance or far superior talents. Yet of all the great men that have walked on earth, none stands out more prominently than Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He is not merely a hero of history. Rather, He is the Master, the One who could say to His followers, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). Indeed, if He is who He said He is, then He alone is *the Master we should follow!*

This course, *Following the Master*, was designed to help you understand how Jesus trained the twelve original disciples and how they grew in their understanding and faith in Him. Presumably you have already had some basic discipleship training and have mastered the essential topics that enable one to start living the Christian life. Hopefully, you are now ready to take your pursuit of discipleship to a higher level. One of the best ways that you can do this is by carefully observing how the first disciples reacted to Jesus Christ while He was living here on earth. Therefore, in this course we will look at Jesus and His disciples through the lens of the Gospel of Mark.

By studying Mark’s gospel (his account of the life of Christ), you should gain more insight into the person of Jesus Christ . . . discovering who He really is . . . and come to grips with what He is calling you (as His disciple) to be and do. This may sound simple upon first reading, but it was an enormous challenge for the first disciples, and it will be for us as well. As we shall shortly see, following Jesus in discipleship will cost us everything, for He accepts nothing less than the total surrender of our will in order to embrace and live out the will of God. Yet for those willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him, they have the most to gain. There is a kingdom that is coming that will be under the rule of Christ Himself, and those who have faithfully trod the path of following the Master will be eternally rewarded to enjoy reigning with Him in glory.

Reasons for Taking This Course

There are many reasons one might have for wanting to study this course, *Following the Master*. First and foremost, this course is designed to help you gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of who Jesus really is . . . the Savior of mankind, yes, but also the living Lord who is alive right now calling men and women like you to be His faithful disciple. The Gospel of Mark clearly portrays Jesus as Lord over disease, nature, and demons. Everything is subject to His authority and command. Yet He also models

the perfect servant-leader who loves and serves others in complete humility. He gives His life as a ransom for many, and His resurrection is the proof-positive that He truly is who He claimed to be.

This course is also designed to help you grow as a modern-day disciple of His. Following Jesus as a disciple, however, is not easy. It was not easy for the original twelve, and it is not easy for Christians today. To be what He wants us to be means that we must relinquish our will to do His will and be willing to do whatever He might call us to do, even if it means the forfeiture of our lives for His sake. We also must learn to give up worldly ideas of leadership and greatness to become humble servants of others. Finally, we must realize we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength; we must live by faith and rely completely on Jesus in all we do and say.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:

- Have a better grasp of the Gospel of Mark through a systematic study of the book.
- Gain a deeper appreciation of the Lord Jesus as the master teacher.
- Apply biblical principles to your life and ministry that you learn from observing how Jesus trained the original twelve disciples.
- Be better prepared to face hardship and suffering in ministry as a result of seeing this modeled in the life of Jesus and His call to radical discipleship.
- Develop a deeper love for the Lord Jesus as you reflect upon His death on the cross for you.
- Be more convinced of the truth of Christianity by virtue of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

About the Author

This course was written by Dr. J. Paul Tanner, who holds both a ThM and PhD degree in Hebrew Language and Old Testament studies. He is versed in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. He has been teaching the Bible for over thirty-five years in various theological seminaries around the world, and has authored numerous articles in professional Christian journals and written several courses for BEE World. He is also the author of an in-depth commentary on Daniel for the Evangelical Exegetical Commentary series produced in conjunction with Logos Bible Software.

Course Organization

For those taking this course online at the Internet Biblical Seminary website, at any time during your online study, you can click the "Course Outline" button located in the top frame to get the linked course outline to display in the left frame.

Units of Study

There are fourteen lessons for this course, grouped into three units:

Unit 1: JESUS' EARLY GALILEAN MINISTRY (Mark 1:1--6:6a)

Lesson 1: The Beginnings of Jesus' Public Ministry: Mk 1:1-45

Lesson 2: Early Controversies with Jewish Religious Leaders: Mk 2:1--3:6

Lesson 3: Staunch Rejection by Jewish Leaders Followed by Kingdom Parables:
Mk 3:7--4:34

Lesson 4: Jesus' Miracles Demonstrating His Sovereign Power: Mk 4:35--6:6a

**Unit 2: THE CONCLUSION TO JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY
AND FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (Mark 6:6b--10:52)**

Lesson 5: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve,
Part I: Mk 6:6b-56

Lesson 6: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve,
Part II: Mk 7:1--8:30

Lesson 7: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part I: Mk 8:31--9:29

Lesson 8: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part II: Mk 9:30--10:12

Lesson 9: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part III: Mk 10:13-52

Unit 3: THE FINAL WEEK IN JERUSALEM (Mark 11:1--16:20)

Lesson 10: Jesus' Arrival at Jerusalem and the Challenge of the Religious Leaders:
Mk 11:1--12:34

Lesson 11: Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders and the Olivet Discourse:
Mk 12:35--13:37

Lesson 12: The Betrayal of Jesus and the Final Passover Meal: Mk 14:1-52

Lesson 13: Jesus' Trials and His Humiliation: Mk 14:53--15:20

Lesson 14: Jesus' Crucifixion on the Cross and His Resurrection: Mk 15:21--16:20

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Gospel of Mark – Introductory Matters

Appendix 2: Answers to the Unit Exams

Appendix 3: Book Chart of the Gospel of Mark

As you plan your study schedule, decide on what dates you want to finish each unit. You can then divide this time into study periods for each lesson. We suggest that you try to do one lesson each week (at least three lessons per month). The lessons vary in length but you should allocate about three-four hours per lesson. You can do this if you study about one hour each day. At this rate, you should be able to complete the course in three to four months. Or you may speed this up by doing two or three lessons per week.

Lesson Organization

Please give careful attention to each part of the lesson:

- Title
- Lesson introduction
- Lesson outline
- Lesson objectives
- Lesson reading assignments
- Lesson content
- Lesson Self Check Quiz

The title, introduction, outline, and objectives provide a preview of the lesson. Your mind will be more alert and receptive, and you will learn better because of this preview. The lesson reading assignments instruct you in any reading material or any exercises that need to be completed.

The lesson development follows the lesson outline. Its comments, suggestions, and questions all help you understand the material and apply God's Word to your life. Be sure to check your answers with the ones provided. These will fix your attention once more on the main points of the lesson. This procedure is designed to make your learning more effective and long-lasting.

Make special note of the maps, charts, and other illustrations that accompany each lesson.

Student Instructions

This course is comprised of fourteen lessons, in which you will systematically study through the Gospel of Mark for the purpose of discovering exactly who Jesus is and what He calls His disciples to be and do. Each lesson is made up of twelve questions along with pertinent comments that help guide you through Mark's gospel. Each lesson is designed to be completed in approximately 2 to 4 hours. We highly recommend that you have a study partner for working through these lessons. This helps with accountability, and it makes the process more enjoyable and interesting.

You and your study partner should plan to do a complete lesson in one sitting. To begin, you simply need to turn to Lesson One and start reading the lesson. Each lesson is sub-divided into "topics," which usually correspond with paragraphs in the biblical text. Your study should proceed like this:

1. Read the biblical passage that corresponds to the "topic" you are studying.
2. Read the notes in the lesson that will help orient you to the study.
3. When you come to a "Question," stop and carefully write your answer in the space provided. You should try to write down your answer to all the questions for the lesson before checking your answers.
4. The final two questions are the same in each lesson. You will make a summary of what you have learned about the person of Jesus Christ, and you will write down what you have learned in this lesson about what you think Jesus wants you to be and to do as His disciple. When the whole group meets for the seminars with the BEE World facilitator, you will have an opportunity to share your insights with the group.
5. From time to time, you will come to a place in the lesson that will indicate you are to read a short commentary on the passage. These "mini-commentaries" (at least one in each lesson) are designed to focus on those passages that may need extra comment and explanation.

6. The answers for the questions are provided near the end of each lesson in a section entitled “Answers to Questions.” As mentioned above, you should try to complete all the questions for the lesson before checking your answers. This will also help you control your time better. In most cases, the answer that is given is *longer* and *more detailed* than you probably made. The course workbook “answer” is designed not only to answer the question, but often to provide you with additional insight to assist you in learning.
5. After you and your study partner have read the Answer, you may wish to quickly discuss the question and answer, depending on how much time you have remaining. In some cases, this may prompt you to do further study of your own.

Map of Palestine in the Time of Jesus Christ



Unit 1: Jesus' Early Galilean Ministry

Mark 1:1--6:6a

Mark's gospel account can be divided up into eight primary sections. [For help in visualizing the book as a whole, see Appendix 3 with a book chart of the Gospel of Mark]. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, Mark skips over the birth narratives of Jesus and jumps right into the Lord's public ministry, beginning with His baptism by John. Unit 1 of this course covers the first five chapters of Mark which can be divided into three main sections:

- Mark 1:1-13 Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry
- Mark 1:14--3:6 Jesus' Galilean Ministry: Phase 1
Miraculous Credentials but Ministry Challenged
- Mark 3:7-6:6a Jesus' Galilean Ministry: Phase 2
Staunch Rejection by Religious Leaders and His Home Town

Most of this material concerns Jesus' ministry in and around the area of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is introduced to the nation through John the Baptist and then proceeds to preach the kingdom while performing attesting miracles. At first, He is generally well-received, but as time goes on His authority is challenged by the Jewish religious leaders. This leads to their staunch rejection of Him and attempt to explain away His ability to do miracles as a power He supposedly receives from Satan.

Unit Outline

Lesson 1: The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry (Mk 1:1-45)

Lesson 2: Early Controversies with Jewish Religious Leaders (Mk 2:1--3:6)

Lesson 3: Staunch Rejection by Jewish Leaders Followed by Kingdom Parables (Mk 3:7--4:34)

Lesson 4: Jesus' Miracles Demonstrating His Sovereign Power (Mk 4:35--6:6a)

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the primary message of Jesus in announcing the kingdom of God being "at hand."
- Identify several of the miracles of Jesus that demonstrated He had been sent by the Father.
- Explain how Jesus chose and worked with the twelve disciples in preparing them to be leaders of the newly formed community of messianic believers.
- Explain how Jesus' interpretation and practice of the Mosaic Law as well as His claim to forgive sins brought Him into direct conflict with the Jewish religious leaders.
- Clarify the meaning of various parables that Jesus taught and His reason for using parables.
- Describe the importance that Jesus placed on "faith" and how the twelve grew in their understanding of Jesus and their faith in Him.

Lesson 1: The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry: Mk 1:1-45

Lesson Introduction

Mark titles his gospel account, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1). This serves as an introduction to the whole work, not merely the first topic regarding John the Baptist. By “gospel,” Mark means *the good news* in general about Jesus Christ (not the gospel message of salvation as in Galatians 1). One of Mark’s primary intentions in writing this work is to portray Jesus Christ as “the Son of God.” Not only does he mention this title in verse one, but he brings it to a climax in Mk 15:39 when the Roman centurion who stood in front of Jesus as He hung on the cross proclaimed, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

Skipping over the genealogy and birth account of Jesus (included by Matthew and Luke), Mark launches directly into the public ministry of Jesus, connecting Him right away with the prediction by the Old Testament prophets that Messiah would be introduced to the nation by a special “messenger.” This was none other than John the Baptist, the son of a Levitical priest but otherwise an outsider to the religious establishment (cf. Luke 1:5-25). The remainder of lesson one reveals how Jesus came on the scene publicly and how His initial miracles quickly gained Him fame and initial popularity.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Jesus’ Forerunner in John the Baptist (1:1-8)
- Topic 2: Jesus’ Baptism and Temptation by Satan (1:9-13)
- Topic 3: The Kingdom Message and Call of the Four Fishermen (1:14-20)
- Topic 4: Jesus’ Healing and Exorcism Ministry at Capernaum (1:21-39)
- Topic 5: Cleansing of a Leper (1:40-45)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain Jesus’ connection to John the Baptist.
- Understand how Jesus’ ministry was aimed at bringing in the kingdom of God and a new era hallmarked by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Describe how Jesus’ initiated His ministry by calling some common fishermen to be His “followers.”
- Relate how Jesus’ initial miracles testified that He had been sent by God and how these gained Him a quick following and much popularity with the people of Galilee.

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Forerunner in John the Baptist (1:1-8)

Parallel Passages: Mt 3:1-6, 7-10; Lk 3:1-9

In the Old Testament, Isaiah the prophet predicted that a man would come who would introduce the nation of Israel to her Messiah (as a forerunner would go before a king to announce his coming). This was fulfilled in John the Baptist, the son of a Levitical priest but otherwise an outsider to the religious establishment (cf. Luke 1:5-25). In preparation for the coming of Messiah Jesus, the nation needed to repent of her sins. Some did, and these were baptized in the Jordan River by John.



Reading:

Begin by reading Mark 1:1-8 in your Bible, and then read the following commentary on these verses.

Commentary: Mark 1:1-8

1:1. Mark 1:1 not only serves as a title for the entire book but also presents one of Mark's primary theological concerns, namely, that Jesus is "the Son of God." He is a Son, not in a biological sense, but in a *relational* sense. Other passages reveal that Jesus Himself is deity and even the Creator of the universe (Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17). As God, Jesus has always existed, but within the Trinity the relationship is best understood in terms of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches there is one God, but this one God has a complex nature, so that we speak of three persons in the godhead (the triune God). Each person of the Trinity has his own role, and the role of Jesus includes that of Him becoming incarnate in order to be the Redeemer of mankind by virtue of the cross, and then proclaimed as Lord following His resurrection and ascension. Jesus' position as "Son" recalls the promise of Psalm 2:7-8 where the Father announces His intention to elevate His Son as king over the nations: "The king says, 'I will announce the Lord's decree. He said to me: 'You are my son! This very day I have become your father! Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance.''" In Mark's gospel, he is concerned to show how the original twelve disciples came to gradually recognize Jesus' identity as more than a human messiah until at last they saw Him as the unique "Son of God" to whom they owed their total allegiance.

1:2-3. Following the title, Mark immediately showed the connection of Jesus' ministry to the Old Testament prophets who anticipated Messiah's coming by drawing together Malachi 3:1 (Mk 1:2) with Isaiah 40:3 (Mk 1:3). Mark attributed the quotation to Isaiah, because Isaiah was the more noted prophet and because the link words ("in the wilderness") from Isa 40:3 set the stage for how he wanted to introduce John the Baptist in verse 4 as the one who appeared "in the wilderness." The "wilderness"--rather than the temple site in Jerusalem--would be the appropriate place from which to launch a *new exodus and deliverance* (note Isa 40:9-11) in which Jesus (a *new Moses*, as it were) would lead the people out of slavery into a new era of salvation-deliverance.

1:4-6. Mark next briefly described John's ministry as one who appeared on the scene as an

Old Testament prophet. He was even dressed in similar fashion to Elijah the prophet (2 Kgs 1:8). John's role was to prepare the people for the coming of Messiah. He did this by calling them to repentance, and those who repented of their sins, he baptized in the waters of the Jordan River. This was a national repentance, calling the Jewish nation--as a nation--to humble themselves in preparation for Messiah to come among them, though of course that also implied individual repentance. The baptism itself did not grant them forgiveness of sins; rather the baptism of repentance was *in reference to* the forgiveness of sins (vs 4). That is, forgiveness came as a result of humbling their hearts and turning to God in repentance. Those who did so submitted to John's baptism as an indication of their act of humility.

1:7-8. John's responsibility was not to gain fame for himself but rather to point people to the coming One, that is, Jesus. John's confession that he was unworthy to untie the thong of Messiah's sandals was indeed significant. In Judaism, it was considered a dishonor to be a slave (that recalled the period when they were slaves in Egypt), and such an act would be considered a *slave duty*. In acknowledging that he was unworthy to do this most humiliating of tasks, John was underscoring that the coming One was indeed greater than a prophet.

Finally, John told the people that the coming Messiah would do more than baptize with water, for He would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This was a theme tied to the Old Testament expectation of a new era in which God would inaugurate a new covenant with His people and pour out His Holy Spirit upon them (Jer 31:31-33; Ezek 36:24-27; Joel 2:28-32). This anticipated not only the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) but also the full realization of the messianic kingdom age (Rom 14:17). Matthew and Luke added the detail that Messiah would not only baptize with the Holy Spirit but also with fire (Matt 3:11-12), an expectation that Messiah would not only bless but would come with a purging judgment (fire was frequently associated with judgment in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 24:6; 29:6). There would be a partial fulfillment of this in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and there will be a greater fulfillment in the period preceding Christ's second coming.

Question 1

In this paragraph, John made an important announcement of what the "Coming One" would do (in contrast to John's baptism with water). What would He do, and why would it be more significant than John's ministry?

Topic 2 -- Jesus' Baptism and Temptation by Satan (1:9-13)

Parallel Passages: Mt 3:13-17; 4:1-11; Lk 3:21-22; 4:1-13

Jesus came to John at the Jordan River and was baptized. In contrast to those who confessed their sins (see Mk 1:5), Jesus had no sins to confess. Mark tells us that it was Jesus, not those gathered at the river, who saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending. In effect Jesus was anointed by the Spirit, which not only enabled Him for the task ahead but pointed to the launching of a new era--one in which He would have the honor of pouring out the Spirit in the post-resurrection setting. Furthermore, a voice from heaven affirmed Jesus' innocence of sin by stating, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." The thought of being *God's Son* has caused considerable debate. However, the concept has nothing to do with biological birth, but rather is rooted in the Old Testament promise of kingship found in Ps 2:7.

Mark only briefly mentions the temptation account in contrast to Matthew (Matt 4:1-11). The forty-day period recalls the time that Moses spent before he received the Law (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9). Satan's repeated question ("if you are the Son of God") reveals that his real intention was to undermine the intimate connection between Jesus as Son and the Father. Yet in each test, Jesus stressed His loyalty to the Father.

Question 2

Look up the promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 and then compare Psalm 2:4-9 (which was written by David). In light of these verses, how do you understand the significance of Jesus being "the Son of God"? Cf. Ps 89:26-27.

Question 3

Look up John 1:1-3. What do you think these verses are saying? What do they imply about the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago?

Topic 3 -- The Kingdom Message and Call of the Four Fishermen (1:14-20)

Parallel Passages: Mt 4:12-22; Lk 4:14-15

Beginning with vs 14, we embark upon the first major section of the book (1:14--3:6), namely, the first phase of Jesus' Galilean ministry. This section will reveal several of Jesus' miracles, which serve as His credentials. It will also show some of the early opposition to His ministry by

the Jewish religious leaders. Mark 1:14-15 indicates that the focus of Jesus' message was about the "kingdom of God," which was *near* or *at hand*. The word "gospel" means *good news*, so Jesus was announcing the good news concerning the kingdom of God that He was advancing. [This general meaning of the word "gospel" is distinguished from the technical use of the term to indicate how one is saved from the penalty of their sins]. However, the kingdom's realization was contingent upon the people repenting and believing in Him as the promised Messiah.

Question 4

There are many passages in the Old Testament that predicted the nature of the kingdom that Messiah would bring in. Look up the following passages and summarize what they teach about this kingdom: Isaiah 2:1-4 and Isaiah 11:1-10. Note in particular Isaiah 11:10. What does this imply about Gentiles in relation to the kingdom?

Question 5

As you read the call of the four fishermen in Mk 1:16-20, what promise did Jesus make to these men? What was Jesus trying to say by this play on the word "fishing"? The call to "Follow Me" is still valid today. What do you think is involved in the act of "following Jesus"?

Topic 4 -- Jesus' Healing and Exorcism Ministry at Capernaum (1:21-39)

Parallel Passages: Mt 8:14-17; 4:23; Lk 4:31-44

The city of Capernaum was situated on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and this became the *home base* of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (cf. Mk 2:1). Here in a Jewish synagogue service, Jesus both taught the people and cast out a demon from a man. Later in the day, He performed several healings. Both His words and His works caused wonder among all, but sparked controversy by some. Jesus' teaching style caused amazement, for "he taught them like one who had authority, not like the experts in the law" (Mk 1:22). In their teaching, the Jewish scribes (the experts in the Old Testament Scriptures) would appeal to the sayings of famous rabbis before them to add authority to a point they wished to make. Jesus, however, taught

directly without citing earlier rabbis, or He quoted OT Scripture and stated its true meaning and implications. That is, Jesus spoke as though He Himself was an authoritative voice for God and had no need to lean upon human opinions.

Question 6

In Mk 1:24, the demon in the man called Jesus “the Holy One of God!” Is this the same as saying that Jesus was simply a *holy man*, someone who was very religious? To help you answer the question, look up the following verses: Isaiah 40:25; 49:7; and 54:5. If Jesus was truly “the Holy One of God,” why did Jesus order him to be quiet? [Notice also Mk 1:34].

Question 7

Some people might say that Jesus was simply a great moral teacher or a prophet. In light of Mark 1:21-28, how would you respond to that statement?

Question 8

After a very busy day, Mark 1:35 gives us some insight into the importance that Jesus placed on prayer. What principles for your life can you learn from His example?

Topic 5 -- Cleansing of a Leper (1:40-45)

Parallel Passages: Mt 8:1-4; Lk 5:12-16

Jesus was not content to limit His ministry to Capernaum, but saw the need to start expanding to all the region of Galilee. Somewhere in his journeys He encountered a man with the dreaded skin disease of leprosy. Lepers were despised by all the people and had to live away from villages so that others would not contract the disease. No one dared to touch a leper (cf. Lev 5:3). This miracle not only showed Jesus’ cleansing power but also substantiated that God had given Him an authority distinct from any that the priests possessed. The instruction to have him show himself to a priest and offer a sacrifice was to fulfill what Lev 14:1-32 required of a healed

leper. In doing so, the healed leper not only faithfully obeyed the Law but became a living witness to the priest concerning the authority of Jesus. This would force the priest to confront the reality that God was at work through Jesus and a new era was dawning.

Question 9

“Observation” is one of the key steps to good Bible study. In this step, we try to *observe what is there* in the text. Meditate on Mark 1:41, and then make at least four observations about this verse.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Question 10

Read Mark 1:28 and 1:45 another time. It seems that Mark is trying to point out the popularity of Jesus in the initial stages of His ministry. Obviously, His ability to cure diseases and do miracles aroused great curiosity. That will quickly start to change as He challenges the religious leaders and makes demands of His disciples. What causes you to want to seek out Jesus?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following statements is *not* correct?

- A. One of Mark's primary themes is to present Jesus as "the Son of God."
- B. Jesus' role as "Son" is related to the OT promise in Ps 2:7 concerning the individual that God would elevate to the role of "king."
- C. Jesus is called God's "Son," because God the Father created Him before anything else.
- D. Jesus, as God's Son, is an equal person of the Trinity, along with the Father and Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 2

Passages such as Ezek 36:24-27 suggested that the fulfillment of the new covenant would be accompanied by a pouring out of the Holy Spirit. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism was appropriate, because His ministry would be in the power of the Holy Spirit, and He would eventually pour out the Holy Spirit on His disciples after His _____.

QUESTION 4

God made a promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne and kingdom. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Which psalm reflects the promise made to David that his descendant would be a "Son" to God and be given the nations as His inheritance?

- A. Psalm 1
- B. Psalm 2
- C. Psalm 23
- D. Psalm 139

QUESTION 6

According to Isaiah 2:1-4, the city of _____ will have a prominent role during the time of Messiah's kingdom rule, and wars will cease on earth.

QUESTION 7

According to Mark 1:18, what did the fishermen do after Jesus said, “Follow Me”?

- A. They went to the nearest synagogue to find out what the local rabbi thought of Jesus.
- B. They helped their father finish cleaning all the fishing equipment.
- C. They took time to pray about their decision before committing themselves.
- D. They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

QUESTION 8

Why were the people at the Capernaum synagogue amazed at Jesus’ teaching?

- A. Jesus taught them many things they had never heard before.
- B. Jesus’ style differed from that of the Jewish scribes, for He taught as one who had authority Himself rather than quoting famous rabbis before Him.
- C. Jesus’ voice was beautiful, like that of an angel.
- D. Jesus explained the Old Testament Scriptures to the people.

QUESTION 9

Jesus did not want the demons to call Him “the Holy One of God,” because that phrase was reserved in the Old Testament for God alone. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Which of the following statements are correct concerning the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-45? [Circle all that are true].

- A. Jesus dared to touch the leper which normally would have rendered a person “unclean.”
- B. The miracle showed that Jesus had authoritative power that the priests did not.
- C. The miracle showed that God was at work through Jesus.
- D. The miracle demonstrated the loving compassion that Jesus had on those who suffered.

Lesson 1 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

The “Coming One” (the Messiah) would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit, in contrast with John’s ministry in which he literally baptized the people in water whenever they repented. This was an outward ritual, though it was intended for those who inwardly repented. Jesus, on the other hand, would do something *internally* for people. He would bring them the Holy Spirit, who would dwell inwardly within them. Historically this did not happen until the Day of Pentecost, which was after His death. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was one of the promises of the new covenant (cf. Ezekiel 36:22-28). Today, when a person believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior, he receives the Holy Spirit at that moment of faith (Eph 1:13-14).

QUESTION 2:

David was King of Israel about 1000 B.C.. God promised David that his son would rule on a throne over the nation after him. This was fulfilled in Solomon. But God also promised David that one of his descendants after Solomon would have an eternal throne and kingdom (a promise fulfilled in Messiah Jesus). This son became known as “The Son of David,” a messianic title. For each and every son that came forth in David’s line, he was to be a “son” to God (note 2 Sam 7:14). This relationship between God and David’s descendant was not biological. Rather, it reflected a relationship of *kingship*. David’s descendant was God’s “son” in the sense that He was God’s earthly representative as king. David also wrote Psalm 2, and in that psalm he recounted the promise that God made him in 2 Sam 7. Notice in Ps 2:7-9, that the one who is “Son” is the one destined to rule over all the nations. Yet Jesus became even more of a “son” in this sense, because not only was He born in the line of David, but He was also supernaturally conceived in Mary’s womb in order to take on human form.

QUESTION 3:

The “Word” in John 1 is clearly a reference to Jesus (note vs 14). Verse 1 says that Jesus was “in the beginning” with God, i.e., He was there at the beginning of creation as recorded in Genesis 1. This does not mean, however, that Jesus Himself was created at this time. Jesus was not created, for He has always existed. More significantly, John 1:3 says that all things came into being through Jesus. This means that Jesus was involved in the original creation (implying that He must be God, for only God can create). Certainly Jesus existed long before He appeared on earth in human flesh.

QUESTION 4:

From Isaiah 2:1-4, we learn that Jerusalem is going to be transformed and be the center of God’s rule on earth. Yet it will not be like the present Jerusalem, because the Lord Jesus is going to rule from there over all the nations of the earth. He will also teach all peoples and judge between nations. Because of His just and righteous rule, wars will cease on earth and there will be peace. Jerusalem will also be a place for *all peoples* on earth to go to and learn from the Lord. Isaiah 11 also emphasizes that He will rule righteously and bring about peace. Furthermore, He will defend and care for the poor and afflicted.

According to Isa 11:10, all the nations of the world will resort to Messiah Jesus in that day. They will have access to Him and partake of His blessings.

QUESTION 5:

Jesus promised these men that He would make them to become “fishers of men.” These men had been professional fishermen. They earned their livelihood by catching fish. They knew how to find fish, catch them, and bring them to shore for selling in the markets. Jesus was about to train them in a whole new task of fishing. But their goal would no longer be mere fish, but rather the souls of people. They would learn how to minister to people, “catching them” by introducing them to Jesus and training them to follow the Master. Jesus is still doing this today. Each one of us, whether man or woman, is called to “Follow Jesus.” As we do, He will revolutionize our lives and give us a new pursuit in life. Then He will use us to “catch” others, bring them to Jesus, and disciple them. To “follow Jesus” begins simply, just as it did for them. Yet, it goes deeper and deeper, as Jesus works to totally transform His disciples from within and without. Ultimately it must lead to total surrender to Him and death to self.

QUESTION 6:

The title “Holy One of God” was frequently used in the Old Testament (especially Isaiah) for the Lord Himself. Notice especially Isaiah 54:5, “And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth.” So, in using this title, the demons were saying much more than the fact that Jesus was some kind of religious person or *holy man*. They were linking Him with the Lord God. Jesus ordered them to be quiet. Even though what they said was true, Jesus did not want anyone’s faith relying on the testimony of demons. Demons were not to be His witnesses!

QUESTION 7:

This passage in Mark 1:21-28 clearly indicates that Jesus had absolute authority over the whole realm of demons. He knew who they were, and they had to obey His voice of command. So not only was Jesus a great spiritual teacher, but He had authority and power that went beyond any earthly teacher or prophet.

QUESTION 8:

It is simply amazing that Jesus Himself felt the need for prayer. Of course, in His case, He sought communion with God the Father. He also did this to set a model for His disciples. If Jesus was committed to prayer, certainly His disciples should be. Here are two good principles we can learn about prayer from this: (1) Jesus chose to do this in the early morning hours. He wanted to give the best part of His day to God, and for God to prepare Him for the events of that day. (2) Jesus sought out a secluded place, meaning a place of privacy. Jesus wanted His time of prayer to be a time of concentration on the Father and seeking His will. Likewise, we need to have time alone with God, without any distractions from others or from other activities.

QUESTION 9:

Things to observe in Mark 1:41:

- a. Jesus was not repulsed by the man's condition; rather He had compassion for the man.
- b. Jesus was not afraid to be near the man (as people commonly were). Rather, He reached out and even touched the leper.
- c. He affirmed to the leper that He was willing to cleanse Him. Jesus did not have to be coerced or talked into doing this. He did it willingly.
- d. Jesus did not have to perform any ritual to heal the leper. All He had to do was to issue authoritative words of command from His mouth, "Be cleansed."

QUESTION 10: Your answer.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. Jesus is called God's "Son," because God the Father created Him before anything else.

QUESTION 2 True

QUESTION 3

resurrection

QUESTION 4 True

QUESTION 5

B. Psalm 2

QUESTION 6 Jerusalem [or Zion]

QUESTION 7

D. They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

QUESTION 8

B. Jesus' style differed from that of the Jewish scribes, for He taught as one who had authority Himself rather than quoting famous rabbis before Him.

QUESTION 9 False

QUESTION 10

All are correct.

Lesson Two: Early Controversies with Jewish Religious Leaders: Mk 2:1--3:6

Lesson Introduction

In lesson one, Mark presented some highlights from the early stage of Christ's ministry. Initially He was very favorably received, and crowds gathered to hear Him and observe the miracles. In lesson two, however, Mark gives us five small episodes that show us the developing hostile reaction to Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders. In the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was controversial--not simply because He did miracles--but because (1) He claimed to be able to forgive sins; (2) He associated with people they regarded as "sinners"; and (3) He and His disciples did things on the Sabbath that were thought to be in violation of the Mosaic Law. We will see in this lesson how Jesus handled each one of these delicate situations and how He refuted the thinking and hypocrisy of the religious leaders.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Healing the Paralytic and Forgiving Sins (2:1-12)
- Topic 2: The Call of Matthew and Eating With "Sinners" (2:13-17)
- Topic 3: Challenged About Fasting (2:18-22)
- Topic 4: Sabbath Controversies: Eating Grain on a Sabbath (2:23-28)
- Topic 5: Sabbath Controversies: Healing on a Sabbath (3:1-6)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain how Jesus used the healing of the paralytic to reveal His authority to forgive sins.
- Understand the basis by which Jesus would associate with those whom the Jewish religious leaders despised and looked down upon.
- Defend the fact that Jesus never violated the Mosaic Law while at the same time refusing to operate by the Pharisaical interpretation of the Law.
- Explain how Jesus had a higher view of keeping the Sabbath than did the religious leaders.

Reminder: Each time you come to a new topic, take time to read the corresponding Bible verses first *before* attempting to answer the questions. Begin by reading Mark 2:1-12.

Topic 1 -- Healing the Paralytic and Forgiving Sins (2:1-12)

Parallel Passages: Mt 9:1-8; Lk 5:17-26

Up to this point, some people may have thought of Jesus as nothing more than a mere man with a special gift for healing diseases and casting out demons. In this short story, however, the issue is raised concerning who has the right to forgive sins. The Old Testament clearly taught that forgiving sins was a prerogative of God Himself (cf. Exod 34:6-9; Ps 130:4; Dan 9:9).



Reading:

After you have read Mark 2:1-12 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 2:1-12

Chapter one of Mark was essentially *positive*, but now Mark records an early controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders . . . evidencing a tension that would continue to build throughout Jesus' earthly ministry until finally climaxing with the crucifixion account.

2:1-2. *The setting.* This account opens with the note that Jesus and the disciples had returned to Capernaum, the city situated on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. [See Mk 1:21 and consult Lesson 1; Topic 4]. According to Mk 1:38-39, they had previously left the area of Capernaum for Jesus to go to the synagogues throughout Galilee, preaching and casting out demons. Now they had returned to their base at Capernaum (Matthew calls it "His own city;" Matt 9:1 and compare 4:13). The word quickly got around that He was "at home," which probably refers to the house of Simon and Andrew (see Mk 1:29). As the crowd gathered at the house (not the synagogue), the room was packed to the full. They were thrilled to hear Jesus speaking "the word" to them. Though we are not told the exact topic He might have spoken on, it might have included the preaching of the good news of the kingdom of God at hand (1:14-15), or it might have included parables meant to encourage their positive response to His preaching (4:14, 33). Luke alerts us that this was not merely a gathering of locals, for his preaching and miraculous healings had attracted the attention of the religious leaders: "while he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem)" (Lk 5:17).

2:3-5. *The presentation of the paralytic.* If the house was like most Palestinian dwellings, there would have been an outside stairway leading to a flat roof. Apparently the four men who brought the paralytic (a paralyzed man) dug through the roof that would have been composed of grass, clay, clay tiles and wood strips to lower him near to where Jesus stood.

Upon seeing the determined effort of the four men, Jesus regarded what they had done as an act of true faith (note the plural, "their faith"). No doubt their hope was that Jesus would heal the paralytic they had made such an effort to bring to Him. Jesus surprised everyone, however, by

initially doing nothing about the paralytic's condition but simply telling him, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (the word "your" is singular in the Gk). Jesus obviously said this loud enough that everyone in the room heard what He said. Although the Bible reveals that disease and death can in certain situations be the consequence of a person's sinful condition (Ps 103:3; Isa 38:16-17; 1 Cor 11:30), this does not mean that this is always the case (Lk 13:1-5; Jn 9:1-3). Apparently in the case of the paralytic, however, the man's physical condition stemmed from his spiritual state, that is, due to sin.

2:6-7. *The reaction of the scribes.* Had Jesus simply healed the paralytic, there would have been some reaction of amazement, but Jesus' words of forgiveness changed the whole dynamic in the room. By what He had said, Jesus implied that He had the authority to forgive sins. This was theologically significant, for in Jewish thought, only God could forgive sins (Exod 34:6-9; Ps 130:4; Isa 43:25; Dan 9:9). Hence the Jewish scribes (the experts in the Mosaic Law) concluded that Jesus was guilty of "blasphemy" (defaming God's majesty), for He had assumed a prerogative that belonged uniquely to God. According to the Mosaic Law, the sin of blasphemy was an offense punishable by death from stoning (Lev 24:15-16).

2:8-9. *Jesus' confrontation of the scribes.* Though the scribes had kept their thoughts to themselves--they did not make their accusation out loud--Jesus "realized in His spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts" (Mk 2:8). So, he confronted them with a question that set them up for what He was about to do (a Rabbinic technique; cf. Mk 3:4; 11:30; 12:37). Which was easier, He asked: to declare forgiveness or to heal the man? That all depends in how one looks at it. In some ways, it was easier to simply say "your sins are forgiven," because there would be no evidence to examine that would allow one to know for sure whether this had actually occurred. To say, "Get up and walk" would be harder, because then the lame man would have to walk. Yet in another way, to say "your sins are forgiven" was harder, because one would have to have such authority to really be able to do that. By linking the two together (the power to heal and the authority to forgive), Jesus was revealing that God had delegated Him with forgiving authority. The healing of the lame man would authenticate that authority.

2:10-12. *The healing and reaction of the crowd.* Having left the scribes to ponder the question of which was easier, Jesus proceeded to heal the paralytic. Yet He prefaced the healing with the words "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2:10). Since God's glory was at stake, surely God would not have granted the healing if Jesus' claim was not true. We also observe here that Jesus referred to Himself as "the Son of Man," the first of fourteen times that the expression is used in Mark's gospel (cf. Mk 2:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 twice; 14:41, 62). The expression was meant to be purposely vague and was Jesus' favorite self-designation in His public ministry. In the OT, the expression "son of man" often meant simply *a human being* (Ps 8:4; Ezek 2:1), and certainly Jesus had partaken of humanity by His incarnation. Yet by the way Jesus used the expression at His trial (see Mk 14:62), it connected Him with the exalted figure in Daniel 7:13-14 who would be given glory and a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

Jesus then healed the paralytic--not by some magical trickery or medical maneuver--but by His spoken word. In doing so, Jesus used something one could see (the healing) to demonstrate that which could not be seen (His authority to forgive). In doing so, both the crowd and the religious leaders were forced with a choice: did they or did they not believe He had such authority.

Mark captured the drama of the whole scene by noting the crowd's reaction: "we have never seen anything like this!" (Mk 2:12).

Question 1

According to Mark 2:5, what kind of claim is Jesus making for Himself? What does this imply about Him? Does the miracle substantiate His claim? [Note 2:10].

Question 2

Can you think of anything that could be more important to your life than knowing God had forgiven all your sins? What does a person need to do to receive God's forgiveness? To help you answer this question, look up and comment on the following verses: Acts 10:43, Colossians 1:13-14, and Colossians 2:13.

Topic 2 -- The Call of Matthew and Eating With "Sinners" (2:13-17)

Parallel Passages: Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32

In this episode, we read about a man named "Levi," also known as Matthew (see Matt 9:9). Although he was a Jew, he collected taxes for Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. Much of the tax he collected from the people also went to the despised Romans. For being a tax collector, other Jews resented Matthew, not only because he collected money for Herod and the Romans, but also because he fraudulently gained money for himself in the process. Indeed, the tax system made it easy for tax collectors like Matthew to defraud others (see Lk 3:12-13). In chapter one, we saw how Jesus' ministry on a Sabbath became an issue of controversy. Now in Mk 2:13-17, a second area of controversy is introduced: the company that Jesus kept.

Question 3

Do you think Jesus knew what kind of a man Matthew was? If so, why would He tell him, "Follow Me!" Does one have to be a "religious person" or a good moral person in the community to become one of Jesus' followers? What is Jesus looking for in His followers?

The Pharisees were a religious party among the Jews who were very committed to keeping the Old Testament Law. But they also added to the Law many of their own commandments and traditions--something that became known as the “oral law” (because they learned it by memory and for many years it was not written down). The Pharisees regarded those who did not know the Law well as “sinners,” but they thought of themselves as “the righteous ones.”

Question 4

Why did the Pharisees look down upon Jesus and His disciples for dining with tax collectors and “sinners”? Read Mark 2:17 another time. Jesus is speaking with irony in this verse, because the Pharisees were not really “righteous” in God’s eyes. They only thought of themselves as being righteous. What is the danger of “self-righteousness”? Why would Jesus favor the “sinners” over “the righteous”?

In comparing the three synoptic accounts, we see that Matthew adds a detail--a reference to an OT scripture from Hosea 6:6--not found in Mark’s account:

Proverb: “Those who are healthy don’t need a physician, but those who are sick do.”
Scriptural note: “Go and learn what this saying means: *‘I want mercy and not sacrifice.’*” (Matt 9:13)
Mission Statement: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The religious leadership had failed to understand God’s will as reflected in Hos 6:6, and Jesus rightly shamed them for this failure. Jesus, by way of contrast, lived out God’s will by pursuing relationships with those whose lives needed to be restored. Having mercy on the lost and those with broken lives was more highly esteemed by God than offering sacrifices at the temple.

Topic 3 -- Challenged About Fasting (2:18-22)

Mt 9:14-17; Lk 5:33-39

Mark now introduces a third controversy that arose with the religious leaders. Jesus’ disciples were not doing all the religious practices that the Pharisees did, fasting being a primary example. The practice of fasting was a popular ritual with the Pharisees, who promoted voluntary fasts on every Monday and Thursday (Lk 18:12). [In the Old Testament, fasting was primarily practiced in times of repentance of sin and when facing national calamities, yet only prescribed at the

annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29)]. Jesus was certainly not against fasting if practiced with the right motive (note Matt 6:16-18), yet He resisted the Pharisaic approach of doing this legalistically (with no heart change before God). In these cases, it was nothing more than a meaningless ritual.

Question 5

As you observe your own culture, can you identify some examples of religious practices that amount to empty rituals--where people do things without their heart really seeking after God and wanting to do His will? List some examples.

In defending His disciples, Jesus described fasting as inappropriate *at that time*, since the current period (announcing the good news of the coming kingdom) was like the celebration of a wedding feast with the bridegroom present. The mention of the bridegroom being “taken away” in Mk 2:20 is a veiled reference to Christ’s impending rejection and death. He knew He was headed for the cross. But His death on the cross would bring in a whole new order, one in which the Old Covenant would be done away with and the new covenant and the church would be inaugurated. The Judaistic system of the Pharisees would then be made obsolete (it was incompatible with the gospel of the kingdom). The two systems could not be mixed; the former one needed to give way to the new. This is what Jesus was trying to explain by the two illustrations in Mk 2:21-22. A mere “patch” or repair of the old was insufficient. Finally, in likening Himself to the bridegroom, Jesus drew upon an OT image for God, a subtle hint at His true identity (see Isa 62:5; Jer 2:2, 32).

Question 6

By the two illustrations in Mk 2:21-22, Jesus is essentially calling His followers to forsake the popular religious system of their day (Pharisaic Judaism) to follow Him. It would take a great deal of courage for His disciples to stand against this system and give all their loyalty to Jesus. Can you see any parallels in this to your own personal situation where you have had to make a courageous decision out of loyalty to God?

Topic 4 -- Sabbath Controversies: Eating Grain on a Sabbath (2:23-28)

Parallel Passages: Mt 12:1-8; Lk 6:1-5

The topic of “the Sabbath” was a major issue for the Pharisees, and they made up numerous commandments to regulate what people did on the Sabbath--all to keep from *working* on the Sabbath (cf. Exod 34:21). Since honoring the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments, failure to observe such a holy day was looked upon as being disrespectful of the Law all together. This is what made it such a major dispute. Although eating some of the grain from the fields was not illegal (cf. Deut 23:25), the Pharisees regarded this as “reaping,” and thus a form of work that was prohibited. They totally misunderstood God’s intent of the Sabbath day.

Question 7

Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. [The story concerned an event involving Abimelech, which happened in the days when his son (Abiathar) was high priest]. How does Jesus’ use of this story serve to refute the argument of the Pharisees?

Jesus concluded His response by pointing out that “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” That is, God designed it for man’s benefit and refreshment, not to add more burdens to man’s life. In stating that “the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath,” Jesus made a personal claim of authority over the sacred day, and in doing so associated Himself with Yahweh. His actions and claim of authority helped define who He was and hinted at His true identity.

While we must be careful not to make a legalistic ritual out of “Sabbath keeping” (cf. Col 2:16-17), there is a valid principle that God wants His disciples to take time off from their work each week and use the additional time for spiritual refreshment and seeking after God.

Question 8

Do you practice “the principle of the Sabbath,” knowing that you need extra time alone with the Lord each week? How can a man or woman in your culture who wants to be a faithful disciple of Jesus practice this principle?

Topic 5 -- Sabbath Controversies: Healing on a Sabbath (3:1-6)

Parallel Passages: Mt 12:9-14; 6:6-11

In this final episode of Lesson Two, we see Jesus involved in another controversial action on the Sabbath, but this time it takes place inside a synagogue and involves a healing. A man was present with a withered hand (paralyzed), which would have kept him from working. From the perspective of the Pharisees, healing was equated with labor, and since the man's condition was not life-threatening, it could have waited. This passage reflects a hardening attitude toward Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders. Notice Mk 3:2--their motive was one of trying to find some grounds by which they could "accuse Him" and thereby discredit Him before the public.

Question 9

As "Lord of the Sabbath" (recall 2:28), Jesus had the right to do "good" on the Sabbath. No doubt, He knew that He would be criticized for this. In Mk 3:5 we are told that Jesus looked at the religious leaders with anger (the only such notice in the New Testament). Why did He do this? Jesus is normally merciful with sinners and compassionate on those in need. So, what brings out His anger? Is there any application we can draw from this as His disciples?

Mark 3:6 reveals the logical outcome of this whole section that began in 2:1, namely, that the religious leaders conspired with the political establishment to put Jesus to death. [The "Herodians" were influential political figures who supported the rule of Herod and his sons]. They seem to have overlooked the obvious implication of the healing: God had acted on Jesus' behalf, thereby affirming His authority. By His words and by what He did, Jesus had done a better job than they of honoring the Sabbath! From this point on, however, their hostility and opposition to Jesus will continue to mount, until finally they crucify Him.

Question 10

Hostility and even threats of murder were things that Jesus had to learn to live with. Even when we are doing what is right (and we are when we follow Jesus!), there will be people that will not only disagree with us, but will be angry with us and possibly even want us killed. Every day when Jesus woke up, He had to decide to obey the Father, even in the face of threats against Him. How does His example help you to face threatening things in your culture?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus.
Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple?
Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

According to Old Testament passages like Exod 34:6-9 and Daniel 9:9, the authority to forgive sins was a prerogative reserved for God alone. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

According to Mark 2:7, what particular offense did the scribes accuse Jesus of?

- A. Healing on the Sabbath.
- B. Failing to pray before He performed a healing.
- C. Being guilty of blasphemy (defaming God's majesty).
- D. Failing to take the man to the synagogue to be healed by the Jewish religious leaders.

QUESTION 3

Why would Jesus have chosen the designation "the Son of Man" for Himself?

[Check all that are true].

- A. The expression was purposely vague, neither clearly a claim to deity or to being Messiah.
- B. Jesus wished to identify with humanity, and the expression was often used in the OT for one who was a human being.
- C. This expression would have clearly been understood to Jews in His day as a claim to being the promised son of David that was destined to inherit an eternal throne and kingdom.
- D. The expression potentially linked Him to the exalted figure in Daniel 7:13-14 that would be given glory and a kingdom.

QUESTION 4

Jesus called for Matthew (Levi) to *follow Him*, because Matthew was an expert in the Old Testament Law, and people would have looked upon him as a spiritual leader. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners," what did He mean by "the righteous"?

- A. He was referring to righteous people among the Jews like the twelve disciples.
- B. He meant that the religious leaders were already righteous followers of the Law and therefore had no need of His salvation.
- C. He meant that all Jewish people were righteous in contrast with Gentiles.
- D. Jesus was speaking about the Jewish religious leaders, but *in irony* (they were not really "righteous," but only thought of themselves as righteous in God's sight).

QUESTION 6

When challenged that His disciples did not fast like the Pharisees, Jesus likened the current time to a wedding in which the _____ was present.

QUESTION 7

The parables about the patch of unshrunk cloth and the old wineskins were meant to teach:

- A. Jesus was ushering in a new era (the messianic kingdom) that would not merely “repair” but would replace the old Judaistic system of the Pharisees.
- B. Jesus was promising new economic blessings for those who followed Him with new clothing for all and abundant wine to drink.
- C. Jesus was promising a political revolt against the Roman Empire, and the removal of all Gentile rulers from the land.
- D. Jesus was warning the Jewish religious leaders that those who tried to stop His new religious revolution would be torn to pieces.

QUESTION 8

Because Jesus’ disciples picked some grain as they walked through the fields on the Sabbath, they were guilty of disobeying the Mosaic Law about working on a Sabbath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In responding to the charge that His disciples had violated the Sabbath by picking the grain, Jesus defended their actions by:

- A. Telling the Pharisees that the Mosaic Law no longer applied to them.
- B. Recounting the story of how God provided manna for the Jews to eat in Moses’ day.
- C. Recounting the story of David’s men who ate the consecrated bread in Abiathar’s day.
- D. Quoting an Old Testament passage that permitted one to pick and eat grain.

QUESTION 10

Following the healing of the man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6), the Pharisees conspired with the Herodians to put Jesus to death. *True or False?*

Lesson 2 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Jesus is clearly making the claim of having the authority to forgive sins. That is an astonishing claim, since the Old Testament always considered this to be the prerogative of God alone. Hence, this is a clear implication of His deity. The miracle of healing the paralytic served to substantiate His claim. If He could do the one, then He could do the other. Yet in His ministry, Jesus did not thrust this matter of His deity on others, but allowed them to come to this realization for themselves. In the Epistles, we find the matter of His deity more clearly stated (e.g., Col 2:9 and Rom 9:5).

QUESTION 2:

The matter of knowing that our sins have been forgiven by God Himself is one of the greatest blessings we could possibly experience. According to some religions, people cannot know this for sure while they are alive. In fact, they must first stand before God and have their deeds judged to see if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. But this only leads to an unhealthy fear of God and a dread of dying. According to the Word of God, people can receive forgiveness of their sins the moment they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (so Acts 10:43). God loves us so much, that He chose to have His Son die on the cross for our sins. Hence, our sins have been paid for, and God is now free to forgive us. In fact, Colossians 2:13 instructs us that all our transgressions have been forgiven, not just some.

QUESTION 3:

Jesus obviously knew what kind of man Matthew was, just as He knows what kind of a sinner we all are. Rom 3:23 teaches us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Jesus never calls people to follow Him because they are worthy or because they are “good,” because, in fact, no one is. When we come to Jesus, we come as we are . . . as undeserving sinners. Once we have put our faith in Him, however, He begins to work on the inside to change us. Once we become one of His disciples, He looks for us to respond to Him in worship and in faith. If we have a softened heart toward Him and feed on His Word, He can work in our lives to transform us and use us for His glory.

QUESTION 4:

The Pharisees looked down upon Jesus and His disciples, because they felt that they were “righteous” and should not be associated with “sinners.” Yet they were only righteous in their own eyes, not God’s. The danger of self-righteousness is that we compare ourselves to other people, rather than looking to God Himself. This leads to arrogance and pride, and there is nothing more blinding than pride. Jesus graciously associated with the “sinners” of that culture, because they were not caught up in such pride, and were more apt to see Him for who He truly was and then respond in faith.

QUESTION 5:

Your answer. Empty rituals give us the feeling that we are “spiritual,” but that does not mean we are really doing what God wants us to do. We may just be going through the motions without really drawing closer to Him.

QUESTION 6:

The Pharisees of Jesus' day exerted a great deal of pressure upon the people of the land. If one did not conform to their expectations, they might be put out of the synagogue or treated as an outcast. It would take a great deal of courage to stand against their "system." [Your answer should reflect your own personal situation].

QUESTION 7:

In the story, it is the high priest's idea to consider giving the sacred bread to David. Also, each day new fresh bread was put out, and the old was removed. It is the old bread that was given to David, which had already served its intended purpose. The key thing to notice, however, is that *God did not condemn this act*. Although the Old Testament commanded that the old bread was to be given to the high priest and his family (Lev 24:9), it did not restrict them from sharing this with others. The needs of David and his men took precedence over ritual, we might say, as long as they did not violate any direct commandment. The same principle applied to Jesus and His disciples regarding the matter of the Sabbath, for Sabbath law was never intended to restrict a person from meeting basic needs.

QUESTION 8:

We all face the pressure of time, and it is easy to let "time alone with God" be squeezed out by other things. Part of learning to be a faithful disciple is learning to give God our time. Having a special time each week when we can spend even extra time with God leads to wisdom. Do you have a plan for yourself?

QUESTION 9:

The Scriptures consistently portray Jesus as patient and kind, merciful and compassionate. So, we know that this episode when He looked upon them with anger was unique. But notice Mk 3:5 carefully. It is not because they were sinners (in general) that He was angry, but because their hearts had become so hardened. They could no longer look upon things and see them from God's perspective. They could not see when God was at work. Most of all, they could not see Jesus for who He really was . . . their promised Messiah. The application that we can draw from this is to guard our hearts from becoming hardened against God. We need to maintain our worship of Jesus and stay humble before Him (cf. Ps 95).

QUESTION 10:

Jesus does not ask us to walk where He has not walked. He constantly faced threats, persecution, and attacks from "religious people." We must be prepared to do the same. [Share your own examples].

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 True

QUESTION 2

C. Being guilty of blasphemy (defaming God's majesty).

QUESTION 3

All are true except "C". [Although Jesus was indeed the "son of David" in whom the Davidic Covenant would be fulfilled, the expression "son of man" was not connected to that promise].

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5

D. Jesus was speaking about the Jewish religious leaders, but *in irony* (they were not really "righteous," but only thought of themselves as righteous in God's sight).

QUESTION 6

bridegroom

QUESTION 7

A. Jesus was ushering in a new era (the messianic kingdom) that would not merely "repair" but would replace the old Judaistic system of the Pharisees.

QUESTION 8 False

QUESTION 9

C. Recounting the story of David's men who ate the consecrated bread in Abiathar's day.

QUESTION 10 True

Lesson Three: Staunch Rejection by Jewish Leaders Followed by Kingdom Parables: Mk 3:7--4:34

Lesson Introduction

In the previous lesson, we saw how the ministry of Jesus and His disciples became controversial and was met by opposition from the Jewish religious leaders. In particular, they accused Jesus and His disciples of breaking the Sabbath. They also were troubled by the implications of what Jesus said and did. For example, His claim to have authority to forgive sins implied He was more than a man. The opposition culminated in Mark 3:6 as the Pharisees started to conspire together in a plot to have Jesus killed.

In lesson three, Jesus and the disciples withdraw back to the area around the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus formally chooses twelve of His disciples to be *with Him* and who will become the original “apostles.” The controversy seen in the previous lesson now boils over into hostile opposition. When the religious leaders observe the crowds starting to entertain thoughts of Jesus being the Messiah, they resort to an underhanded accusation that He is operating by the power of Beelzebul (that is, Satan). As a result, Jesus (1) warns the religious leaders that they stand on verge of committing an unpardonable sin; and (2) begins to teach by way of parables so as to limit what He reveals about the establishment of God’s kingdom program.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Withdrawal to Galilee and Appointment of the Twelve (3:7-19)
- Topic 2: The Beelzebul Accusation and Jesus’ Identification of His True Family (3:20-35)
- Topic 3: Parables About the Kingdom: Part 1 (4:1-20)
- Topic 4: Parables About the Kingdom: Part 2 (4:21-34)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand how and why Jesus chose the twelve apostles.
- Explain the significance of the Beelzebul accusation made against Jesus.
- Discuss the reason for Jesus’ use of parables and explain the meaning of the parable of the soils.
- Explain the meaning of the parable of the lamp and why it is crucial for disciples to respond in faith and obedience to what has been revealed to them.

Topic 1 -- Withdrawal to Galilee and Appointment of the Twelve (3:7-19)

Parallel Passages: Mt 4:24-25; 12:15-16; 10:1-4; Lk 6:17-19; 6:12-16

The plan for expanding the ministry throughout Galilee (recall Mk 1:38-39) is now met with a *withdrawal* back to the Sea of Galilee. Since Jesus was certainly not fearful of the opposition He recently faced, it is more probable that this was primarily for the benefit of the disciples, giving them a chance to process what they had been learning and experiencing. Nevertheless, His popularity was exploding and crowds came seeking Him from regions far beyond Galilee itself (even from Gentile areas like Tyre and Sidon!). In Mark 3:10 we are told that many sought “to touch Him.” This reflected a popular religious idea associated with healing (Mk 5:27-31; 6:56; Acts 5:15-16; 19:11-12).

Question 1

Read verses 3:11-12 again. The demons clearly know Jesus’ true identity as “the Son of God,” yet He commanded them not to reveal who He was. [Jesus did not want a demonic source for this confession]. Obviously, the Bible teaches that demons are very real, and Jesus stood in staunch opposition to them. How would you describe the authority that Jesus has in relation to demonic spirits? What does this imply about the presence of evil in the world?

In Mk 3:13-19 Jesus appoints twelve of His disciples to have special authority for serving Him. Four of these were the fishermen that He had called to follow Him in Mk 1:16-20, as well as Matthew the tax collector (see Mk 2:13-14) and even one who had been a Zealot (a revolutionary group dedicated to the overthrow of Rome; Mk 3:18). The selection of such a diverse group-- and “everyday folk” at that--shows that Jesus did not intend to build His leadership team based on earthly credentials, especially not from the existing religious establishment. Luke notes that Jesus spent a full night in prayer before choosing them (Lk 6:12), and that this particular group of twelve were designated as “apostles” (Lk 6:13). That the apostles numbered twelve was obviously significant, paralleling the structure of Israel’s twelve tribes. Yet these represented the restoration of Israel for the new era (Matt 19:28), eventually leading the messianic community of believers as it expanded beyond the Jewish nation to include Gentile believers as well.

Question 2

Before sending them out to preach and cast out demons, there was one prerequisite that they needed to do. What was this? [Notice carefully vv 14-15]. What principle can you draw from

this that would be essential for your ministry today? What practical things can you do to practice this principle?

Topic 2 -- The Beelzebul Accusation and Jesus' Identification of His True Family (3:20-35)

**Parallel Passages: Mt 12:22-30; 7:16-20; 12:31-37, 46-50;
Lk 11:14-15, 17-23; 6:43-45; 12:10; 8:19-21**

This episode is one of the most critical in the whole story, for it shows the severe hardness of heart by the religious leaders against Jesus. It is also because their accusation against Him that He begins to teach in parables. This topic begins and ends with a focus upon the earthly family members of Jesus, with the account of the Beelzebul accusation sandwiched in-between. Taken together, Mark 3:20-35 presents one of the most difficult moments in Jesus' public ministry prior to the cross. Though He was the Messiah of Israel sent from Heaven, He was thought to be an insane religious fanatic by His earthly family members and was accused of working by satanic power by the religious leaders of the nation.



Reading:

After you have read Mark 3:20-35 in your Bible, read the following commentary for Mark 3:22-30.

Commentary: Mark 3:22-30

This account stems from the accusation by the religious leaders that Jesus' power to heal and cast out demons came from "Beelzebul." Matthew adds some details not found in Mark's account regarding the event that precipitated the accusation. According to Matt 12:22, Jesus had healed a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute, and afterwards the man was able to see and speak. However, it seems to have been the reaction of the crowds that incited the religious leaders to make the accusation they did. Matthew noted that the crowds were amazed and began saying, "Could this one be the Son of David?" This was a well-known title for the expected Messiah in whom the promise to David would be fulfilled (cf. Matt 22:42). That is, God had made a special promise to King David through Nathan the prophet that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne and kingdom (see 2 Sam 7:12-16). Theologians speak of this as the "Davidic Covenant." This individual (who would rule as king over the entire world) was expected to bring in an everlasting kingdom of peace, righteousness and blessing. [For a poetic description of the time

of His rule, see Psalm 72. Isaiah also describes the time when Messiah will sit on “the throne of David” (Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-10).

3:22. *The Beelzebul accusation.* To hear the crowds in Jesus’ day attributing this Messianic title “Son of David” to Jesus was too much for the religious leaders to bear. Their only recourse was to find an alternative explanation for Jesus’ power. Matthew wrote, “when the Pharisees heard this they said, ‘He does not cast out demons except by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons!’” (Matt 12:24; cf. Mk 3:22).

Beelzebul seems to have been the name of a Canaanite pagan god, derived from the name Baal, meaning “lord” (cf. 1 Kgs 1:1-3). In Jewish circles, Beelzebul became a substitute name for Satan himself. [He is referred to in Jewish extrabiblical literature such as the *Testament of Solomon* 2.8--3.6; 6.1-11]. Mk 3:22 tells us that the “scribes” (those who were experts in the Old Testament and thus served as *teachers*) were accusing Jesus of getting His miraculous power from Satan, as though He were some sort of Satan-empowered sorcerer. In saying this, the scribes hoped the crowds would abandon any thoughts they might be having that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

3:23-26. *The illogic of the accusation.* The explanation of the scribes and Pharisees was a serious charge to make against Jesus. Yet before warning them just how serious this was, Jesus first pointed out how illogical their explanation was. It made no logical sense that Jesus--supposedly operating by the power of Satan--would be *invading* Satan’s territory and freeing those he held captive. That would be like soldiers from one country going to war and fighting against their own soldiers. That would be a sure way to lose a war.

Matthew adds a comment by Jesus at this point not found in Mark: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). Jesus points to the alternative conclusion: His work is by the Holy Spirit, and this testifies that the realization of the messianic kingdom rests with Him.

3:27. *Jesus’ power to plunder Satan.* Second, Jesus was out to plunder “the strong man” (Satan) and his house (vs 27), thereby showing that He was even stronger than Satan. Jesus had demonstrated in His ministry that He was out to free those whose lives had been wrecked by Satan, whether from physical diseases, demon possession or simply from the ravages of sin. Rather than operating by Satan’s power, anyone doing what Jesus was doing would need to be more powerful than Satan to accomplish such a goal.

3:28-30. *The warning of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.* Having shown how illogical the reasoning of the scribes and Pharisees was, Jesus finally turned to address the seriousness of their sin. Jesus was indeed “the Son of David.” He was the promised Messiah, and His mission was to bring salvation to those who trusted in Him and to establish His kingdom over all the earth. For an individual to reject Him as Messiah was one thing, but for them--the religious leaders of the nation--to cause the people of Israel to misidentify Him based on the lie that He operated by Satan’s power was quite another. To do so was to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. [The word “blaspheme” means to maliciously slander; cf. Lev 24:16]. That, Jesus said, was “an eternal sin” and something that God would hold them accountable for and not forgive.

The reason this sin was regarded as “blaspheming against the Holy Spirit” is because the miracles that Jesus did, He did by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is, it was the Holy Spirit testifying to those of the Jewish nation that Jesus was their Messiah. These religious leaders were

slandering what the Holy Spirit was doing and proclaiming regarding Jesus. If they persisted in their rejection of Jesus as Messiah and in attributing His works to Satan (an insult of the highest order), they would never obtain forgiveness before God. Note, however, that Jesus does not say they had already gone too far; He is warning them to stop before it's too late. Because of the unique nature of this sin (committed by the religious leaders at the time of Christ's public ministry to turn the crowds against Jesus), many believe that this is not a sin that is repeatable today.

Question 3

According to Mk 3:21, what were the family members of Jesus saying about Him? How do you think this would have made Jesus feel? Have you had to face ridicule and insults from your family members? Does it console you to know that Jesus faced the same?

Question 4

When Jesus gave His warning in vv 28-30 about “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” to whom was He speaking? What is the promise for believers in Romans 8:38-39?

In the final verses of this chapter, the focus returns to Jesus' family members who were seeking a chance to talk with Him. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to talk about His “greater family.”

Question 5

Meditating on Mk 3:33-35, whom does Jesus consider His greater family to be? To understand how to enter God's family, read John 6:40. What is God's will for us?

Topic 3 -- Parables About the Kingdom: Part 1 (4:1-20)

Parallel Passages: Mt 13:1-23; Lk 8:4-15

It is no accident that this chapter with the kingdom parables follows the Beelzebul accusation. The accusation by the religious leaders reflected their severe hardness of heart and rejection of

Jesus as Messiah. Consequently, Jesus made a change in His teaching style to a greater use of parables. Note carefully Mk 4:10-12. Teaching through parables gave the disciples an opportunity to learn more truths about Christ's coming kingdom ("the mystery of the kingdom of God"), while at the same time it concealed truth from those who were rejecting Him. [In Jewish texts, a "mystery" was something that could only be understood with special revelation; so Dan 4:9; 4 Ezra 10:38; 12:36-38]. Mark quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to show that the matter of limiting divine revelation about the kingdom was a form of designed judgment on the nation. The disciples were privileged to be given understanding (cf. Mk 4:34).

Question 6

Read the parable of the sower in Mk 4:1-9. The parable obviously teaches a spiritual lesson. The seed is the word of God--the message about Jesus and His kingdom (Lk 8:11-12), and the four soils represent four kinds of people who respond to the message. What distinguishes the fourth soil (the good soil) from the first three? What does this suggest is possible for people identified as "good soil"?

Meditate upon Mk 4:10-12 for a few moments. Jesus is talking about having *spiritual eyes* to see *spiritual truths*. In Jesus' day, not everyone could see His kingdom at hand. We might say that the kingdom exists now in a *spiritual form*--He is exercising His authority as king, and He is forming the citizens for His kingdom. In the future--following His second coming--the kingdom will be fully established and the entire world will be transformed.

Question 7

Do you ever get dejected, discouraged and even feel sorry for yourself? According to Mk 4:10-12, what great privilege do you have? What does this mean for you?

In Mk 4:13-20, Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower to His disciples. According to Mk 4:10, this took place when He was alone with them. Just as Jesus sowed the word and people responded in different ways, so it will be with us. Not everyone will respond the same way when we try to give them the word of God.

Question 8

One of the things that we can learn from this parable is that there are many obstacles that stand in the way of people coming to faith in Christ and becoming fruitful for Him. What things do you see in these verses (Mk 4:13-19) that hinder people from becoming fruitful disciples? What is the folly of those who refuse Jesus because their quest for worldly riches and desires?

Topic 4 -- Parables About the Kingdom: Part 2 (4:21-34)

Parallel Passages: Mt 13:24-35; Lk 13:18-21

In this closing section, Mark gives us some of Jesus' other parabolic teachings (and if we consult Matt 13:24-58 we see that there were even more parables than these). He begins in Mk 4:21-23 by talking about what is "revealed" and what "comes to light." Just as a lamp's purpose is to illumine the things in a room, so God's desire is that the spiritual truths presently being kept secret from those with hardened hearts will ultimately be revealed. But the revealing of these spiritual truths would occur *progressively*. For those who had "ears to hear" (e.g., Jesus' disciples), they would begin understanding to some extent now. Greater understanding would occur later, following Jesus' resurrection and then later still in Acts as the church expanded to include Gentiles. Finally, all things would come to light at Jesus' second coming and formal inauguration of the kingdom.

This suggests that verses 24-25 (concerning one's standard of measure) are not talking about money or physical things, but rather about being given more spiritual illumination . . . spiritual understanding (especially regarding Jesus and how He will bring about the kingdom of God) . . . and how every disciple needs to be faithful in responding to what has been revealed to him.

Question 9

Meditate for a moment on Mk 4:24-25. What principle can you derive from these verses for your life as Christ's disciple?

In the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mk 4:26-29), the stress is on the progression of the growth as the harvest comes forth in steps. The parable is meant to teach about the preaching of the Word and how God mysteriously is at work to cause growth and a harvest. Hence, the

disciples were to do their part to sow the kingdom message, but they did not need to be concerned with *how* the growth occurred. The latter was God's concern; He would do it.

In Mk 4:30-32, the point of the parable of the mustard seed is to emphasize the contrast between the very tiny mustard seed when it is sown and the final size of the bush that eventually comes forth from it. From what appears to be such a small and insignificant beginning, a very surprising conclusion results. The point of the parable, however, is to describe the process by which the kingdom of God takes place. It began in what appeared to be a rather insignificant way (with the son of a carpenter and some fishermen in out-of-the-way Galilee), but by the time of Christ's return in glory it will be a glorious kingdom that fills the earth. Jesus will rule over all creation, and those who have become His disciples throughout the ages will be resurrected to enjoy the blessedness of His kingdom. Mark ends the parable on the note that "the wild birds can nest in its shade," which is a loose quotation from Ezekiel 17:23. The imagery suggests protection and peace. The context in Ezekiel is dealing with the exaltation of the messianic kingdom and the nations that will be present for that event, suggesting thereby the presence of gentiles. Hence, the kingdom program emerging from Galilee would eventually come to incorporate Gentiles as well (anticipating how the church would develop in the book of Acts).

Question 10

How does the parable of the mustard seed encourage you in your own particular situation in your culture as one of Jesus' disciples? Why is it important for us to remember the second coming of Christ and where history is headed?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What did Jesus do on the night before choosing the twelve apostles?

- A. He turned in early to make sure He got a good night's sleep.
- B. He went to the closest synagogue to consult with one of the Jewish religious leaders.
- C. He spent the whole night in prayer.
- D. He personally interviewed each man to make sure he was committed to the ministry.

QUESTION 2

Before mentioning that the apostles would be sent out to preach, Mark mentions that in preparation for their ministry they would need to spend time _____.

QUESTION 3

After the healing of a man who had been blind and mute, the crowds began raising the possibility that Jesus was “the Son of David” (the Messiah). The Jewish religious leaders accused Him of doing His miracle by the power of _____, that is, by Satan's power.

QUESTION 4

In the context of Mark 3:28-30, what was “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”?

- A. Committing very evil sins that would cause a person to lose his (or her) salvation.
- B. Participating in the worship of Satan.
- C. Refusing to attend church and take communion.
- D. Attributing the miracles that Jesus did to the power of Satan, thereby slandering the Holy Spirit who did the miracles as a testimony to the Jews of His day that Jesus was the Messiah.

QUESTION 5

In Jesus' refutation of the Beelzebul accusation, the “strong man” in His illustration about plundering the “strong man's” house refers to Jesus Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Teaching through parables gave the disciples an opportunity to learn more truths about Christ's coming _____ program, while at the same time it concealed truth from those who were rejecting Him.

QUESTION 7

The parable of the soils teaches that people will respond in different ways to the message of Jesus and His kingdom, and that the Christian's goal is to be like the seed sown on the good soil. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The parable of the lamp and one's standard of measure is designed to teach:

- A. That every Christian should be a faithful witness for the Lord.
- B. That when the disciples conduct their preaching ministry at nighttime, they should use lamps so that all the people will be able to see.
- C. That Christians should be generous with other people (giving an extra measure to those in need).
- D. That the disciples need to listen and respond carefully to what God is revealing about spiritual truths, in order that more might be revealed to them.

QUESTION 9

The parable of the man casting seed upon the soil (Mk 4:26-29) is designed to teach that Jesus' disciples need to be faithful to do their part in preaching the Word, and that God will be responsible to bring about the growth and harvest. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

In the parable of the mustard seed, the reference to "the birds of the air" nesting under its shade probably refers to:

- A. Demons that are opposed to the kingdom program of Jesus Christ.
- B. The blessings to come on animals after Christ's kingdom is fully manifested.
- C. The fact that Gentiles will be included in Christ's kingdom and enjoy its blessings.
- D. The fact that the kingdom program will be opposed by hostile nations of the world.

Lesson 3 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

We can observe at least two important things concerning Jesus and the demonic spirits. First, whenever they were in the presence of Jesus, they (i.e., the humans they inhabited) would fall before Him in recognition of His infinite superiority (vs 11). Second, He had absolute command over them, and they had to obey His instructions. Hence, they were completely subject to Him. Regarding the presence of evil in the world, we can certainly conclude from our study that demons are responsible for much (but not necessarily all) of the evil we see in our world and the sufferings that people experience. Satan and the demonic angels are in rebellion against the One true God and His creation.

QUESTION 2:

The prerequisite for the twelve was that they were to be “with Him” (vs 14). Everything they needed to know, they would get by watching Him, listening to His teaching, and observing how He did ministry. The principle for us today is that we will only be prepared for spiritual ministry because of being “with Jesus” and learning from Him. Practically speaking, we do this by spending time with Him in His Word, conversing with Him in prayer, and learning to walk by faith with Him while completely relying upon His power and authority.

QUESTION 3:

His family members said, “He has lost His senses,” implying that He was a mentally imbalanced religious fanatic. Undoubtedly Jesus felt hurt by their insults, but this did not deter Him from doing what God the Father wanted Him to do. When we face similar ridicule and insults, we know that we can pray to the One who has experienced the very same thing and therefore understands our hurts.

QUESTION 4:

Jesus’ warning about “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” was directed to the unbelieving scribes and religious leaders (not to His disciples). If these religious leaders persisted in their hardness of heart, accusing Jesus of doing miracles and casting out demons by Satan’s power, when in actuality He did these by the power of the Holy Spirit, then they would be concluding their own fate and would never obtain eternal life. Romans 8:38-39 is the promise for believers: nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The difference is that these blasphemous religious leaders would never obtain eternal life; believers in Christ can never lose it.

QUESTION 5:

Jesus’ “greater family” are those who follow Him, who have become His disciples. The will of God is that we “believe” in Jesus, and this is how we enter His “family” and because of which we have eternal life. From these verses in Mk 3:33-35, we learn that we have both an earthly family and a spiritual “family of God.” The latter is the most important, even though we are to love our earthly family and seek to introduce them to Jesus.

QUESTION 6:

The fourth soil, the good soil, is distinguished by the fruit that it yields in great abundance. This teaches us that we should desire to be like the “good soil.” If we walk with Jesus, responding to His word in faith and obedience, this is the kind of life we can experience. To become the “good soil” that bears much fruit, we will need to stand firm in the face of affliction and persecution (Mk 4:17), and we will have to shun the worries of the world and not fall victim to the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things (Mk 4:19).

QUESTION 7:

All Christians will be discouraged at times, but we don’t have to remain that way. We need to remember that we are very blessed, because our eyes have been opened to *see spiritually* and to understand what God is doing. We must be thankful that we are not still walking in darkness like most people in the world (cf. Col 1:13-14).

QUESTION 8:

(1) Satan will be working against those we witness to, and will try to cast doubt on God’s truth before it fully sinks in. (2) Some people will be initially interested or excited, but they will be deterred by affliction or persecution. (3) Some people will have a desire for worldly riches and pleasures, and will not be willing to follow Christ at the expense of giving up these ambitions. The folly of the last category is that everyone will die, and no matter what worldly riches and desires they have accumulated, they will have to give them up at death. Those who have pursued eternal riches will be able to enjoy them forever.

QUESTION 9:

The principle is that we must listen carefully to what God teaches us through His Word. If we hope to receive more “light,” i.e., more spiritual illumination and understanding from God, then we must first respond faithfully to what we have already been given. So, this is a stewardship principle: do well with what you have been given (through faith and obedience), and you will be given more. The life of a disciple should be an unending journey of coming to know more and more spiritual truth, but this is contingent upon how we handle what we have already received.

QUESTION 10:

The parable of the mustard seed is encouraging. At times, we may think that God’s kingdom plan is being defeated or that we are on the losing side, but that is not really true. It is growing, and eventually it will succeed. His kingdom will be victorious, and we are on the winning side! Unbelievers may doubt us, ridicule us, or even persecute us. But one day when Christ returns, we will have no regrets for being faithful to Him!

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. He spent the whole night in prayer.

QUESTION 2

with Him (or with Jesus)

QUESTION 3

Beelzebul

QUESTION 4

D. Attributing the miracles that Jesus did to the power of Satan, thereby slandering the Holy Spirit who did the miracles as a testimony to the Jews of His day that Jesus was the Messiah.

QUESTION 5 False

QUESTION 6

kingdom

QUESTION 7 True

QUESTION 8

D. That the disciples need to listen and respond carefully to what God is revealing about spiritual truths, in order that more might be revealed to them.

QUESTION 9 True

QUESTION 10

C. The fact that Gentiles will be included in Christ's kingdom and enjoy its blessings.

Lesson Four: Jesus' Miracles Demonstrating His Sovereign Power: Mk 4:35--6:6a

Lesson Introduction

Following the parables is a series of miracles that culminates in Jesus raising someone from the dead. A significant progression can also be noted in this series of miracles, each of which represents a threat to mankind in creation. The first concerns nature (Mk 4:25-41), the second an exorcism (5:1-20), the third disease (5:25-34), and the fourth death (5:21-24, 35-43).

Yet the miracles are not merely for showing Jesus' power and authority. They serve to raise the question, "Who is Jesus?" It becomes apparent in the first episode (4:35-41) that the disciples have not yet fully fathomed who Jesus really is. They ask: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mk 4:41). As a result, Jesus is not yet ready to tell His disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection, and He will not do so until they openly acknowledge that He is God's Messiah.

Each of the four stories seen in this lesson involves more than a miracle. In each, Jesus is faced with a challenge to His authority and identity as Lord. In the first story, the calming of the storm at sea, Jesus is challenged by the disciples and the raging storm. They ask, "Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mk 4:38). Jesus asserts His authority over the storm by calming the sea. In the second story, Jesus is challenged by "Legion" in a case of demon-possession, "What business do we have with each other?" (Mk 5:7). Jesus asserts His authority over the demonic realm by casting out the demons and restoring the man. In the third story, the mourners in Jairus's house mock the thought that Jesus will be able to do anything for the daughter that had died (Mk 5:40). Yet He asserts His authority over death by raising her back to life. Finally, in His appearance at Nazareth, his own townspeople respond in unbelief, treating Him as nothing more than a simple carpenter and taking offense at Him (Mk 6:3). In this case He does not assert His authority, leaving them the losers (they missed out on miracles that could have been theirs).

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Calming the Storm at Sea (4:35-41)
- Topic 2: Encounter and Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)
- Topic 3: The Miracle with Jairus's Daughter--The Synagogue Official (5:21-43)
- Topic 4: Conclusion: Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth (6:1-6a)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand more fully Jesus' authority over nature, the demonic realm, sickness and death
- Explain how the disciples had to grow in their understanding of Jesus and His authority
- Explain how Jesus brought Jairus, the synagogue official, through a process that was meant to increase the faith he had in Jesus (and apply that lesson to your life today)
- Understand how important God views "faith" in deciding how and with whom He will miraculously work

Topic 1 -- Calming the Storm at Sea (4:35-41)

Parallel Passages: Mt 8:23-27; Lk 8:22-25

The opening words of verse 35, "on that day," indicate that this event occurred on the same day that Jesus taught the kingdom parables. This should give us some insight: following a time of teaching, God will often provide opportunity for our faith to be tested . . . to see if we have really comprehended what we should have.

Question 1

Once you have carefully read over Mk 4:35-41, try to evaluate the disciples. Keep in mind that these are experienced fishermen--"professionals" in boating. Notice carefully Jesus' rebuke to them in verse 40. What seems to be the problem they are having?

We realize that this storm at sea was very frightening, even for experienced fishermen. Nevertheless, Jesus' rebuke of them in verse 40 suggests that they should not have been fearful. One way that we can apply this to our life today is to learn from this how to handle a "crisis situation" without being overwhelmed by fear or panicking.

Question 2

Pause for a moment and look up 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Our goal in Bible study is to *correctly apply the Word of God to our lives*. As a disciple of Jesus, what can you learn from this story about handling a crisis situation? If you had a chance to talk to the disciples in the middle of the storm, what would you have counseled them to do?

Question 3

Read verse 41 one more time. Think about all that you have learned about Jesus in the first four chapters of Mark's gospel. How would you answer this question, "Who then is this?"

Topic 2 -- Encounter and Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)

Parallel Passages: Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-39

Although we have seen examples earlier in Mark about Jesus casting out demons, this story is a more intense encounter between Jesus and the demonic realm. As such, the story is an even more powerful demonstration of Jesus' authority over the world of Satan. The demons in the man went by the name "Legion" (vs 9). This was a term used of a Roman military regiment consisting of 6,000 soldiers, although in this context it probably simply indicates a very large number (in one sense, Jesus was vastly outnumbered). Certainly the man's situation was very grim.

Question 4

In a future course, we will learn a methodology for the right way to study the Bible. There are three primary steps for doing this: (1) observation, (2) interpretation, and (3) application. In the first stage of observation, the emphasis is upon *carefully observing* the text--taking notice of as many details as possible. For Question 4, we want to "observe" as many things as we can that characterized the demon-possessed man. Make a list of the things you observe.

In Mk 5:14-20 we see contrasting responses to what Jesus did. The word got out quickly, and people from the nearby villages ran out to see what had taken place. Some manuscripts list the location as the region of the Gerasenes, and others the region of the Gadarenes. In either case, the event took place on the east side of the Sea of Galilee in the Decapolis region, an area that was predominantly Gentile. This is favored by the fact that: (1) raising swine would have been out of place for people who were forbidden by the Law to eat pork (Lev 11:7); and (2) Jesus made a reference to “your people” when he gave instructions to the man (vs 19).

Question 5

Summarize the contrast between the man who had been delivered of the demons and the people who lived in this region. Why do you think Jesus refused to allow the man who had been delivered to come with them?

Question 6

Think about Mk 5:19-20 for a moment and Jesus’ instructions to this man. Now he had become a disciple of Jesus. What kind of lesson can you draw from the mission that Jesus gave him to do?

Topic 3 -- The Miracle with Jairus’s Daughter--The Synagogue Official (5:21-43)

Parallel Passages: Mt 9:18-26; Lk 8:40-56

The miracle with Jairus’s daughter is a relatively long account and also particularly significant within the overall story: (1) Jairus is not simply a Jewish man; he is a “synagogue official;” and (2) the daughter is not merely healed; she is brought back to life after having died. The first point is ironic considering the antagonism Jesus had experienced at the hands of various Jewish religious leaders. The second point paves the way for the truth that Jesus holds the key to life and death, and helps prepare the disciples for coming to grips with His own resurrection from the dead.

The story is also unique from another vantage point with its sandwich-like structure. The story begins in vv 21-24 with Jairus humbly coming to Jesus to make his request, then it is interrupted by the strange account of the woman with a hemorrhage (vv 25-34), and finally returns to focus on Jairus and his daughter (vv 35-43).



Reading:

After you have read Mark 5:21-43 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 5:21-43

Although several miracles by Jesus have already been reported in Mark's gospel, this one is strikingly different from anything seen thus far. Up to this point, we have observed increasing opposition by the Jewish religious leaders to Jesus' ministry, particularly in their plot to have Him killed (Mk 3:6) and in their accusation that He did miracles by the power of Satan (Mk 3:22). Now we have an appeal for help coming from a man named Jairus, a synagogue official (a man we might have expected to have been more in league with the Pharisees). A second distinctive in the reporting of this miracle is the interruption in the narrative by a woman with a hemorrhage who sought to be healed by touching Jesus. So, we have another example of a sandwiching technique that Mark is fond of (recall Mk 3:20-35). In this case, the account of the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:21-24, 35-43) is interrupted by the incident of the woman with a hemorrhage (5:25-34). This creates a delay in Jairus's haste to bring Jesus to his daughter that is providentially used to test and strengthen his faith. That the delay is deliberately and divinely intended is confirmed by the common elements that the two stories share:

- Both stories are of females healed by the touch of Jesus
- Both are called "daughter" by Jesus
- The woman had the hemorrhage for twelve years (5:25), and the little girl was twelve years old (5:42)
- In both accounts, Jesus is either questioned or laughed at (5:31 and 5:40)
- In both accounts, Jesus is brought into contact with uncleanness, the menstrual hemorrhage of the woman (5:25) and the corpse of the child (5:41)

5:21-24. *Jairus's request of Jesus.* Upon returning to the western side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is met by large crowds which prompted Him to stay by the seashore. There a man named Jairus came forward to meet Him. Being a "synagogue official" (Gk *archisunagōgos*)--one who directed the Jewish synagogue service (Acts 13:15)--one might have expected him to have been like-minded with the Jewish religious leaders who opposed Jesus (cf. Lk 13:14). However, his approach to Jesus was unusually humble, for he "fell at His feet" (Mk 5:22). He was obviously desperate ("he asked him urgently," lit., *implored Him much*, 5:23) for his daughter was lying sick and at the point of death. [Luke adds that she was his only daughter, Lk 8:42]. Furthermore, he

expressed *faith* in Jesus' ability: "Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and live" (5:23). He undoubtedly knew about Jesus' ability to miraculously heal (Mk 1:21-28), and he believed Jesus could save his daughter's life. Jesus agreed to accompany him, and as the two went off together, they were pressed by the large crowd around them (setting the stage for the next scene).

5:25-29. *The touch by the woman with a hemorrhage.* As Jairus and Jesus trudged along, an unnamed woman from the crowd with an incurable condition approached them. She had suffered from a hemorrhage (lit., *a flow of blood*) for twelve years. Scholars suggest this may have been a chronic menstrual disorder or a uterine hemorrhage. In any case, this rendered her ritually unclean (cf. Lev 15:25-27), which not only forced her into social isolation but had resulted in her becoming financially impoverished by her desperate attempts to get help from doctors. Yet none had been able to help her, and she had become worse. She, too, had heard of Jesus' ability to heal, though she did not understand how this worked. So, she falsely concluded, "If only I touch his clothes, I will be healed" (5:28). [Possibly she was trying to avoid any public embarrassment of rendering Jesus unclean in front of the crowds]. Despite her misunderstanding of the process, she did have faith, as Jesus later acknowledged (5:34). As unorthodox as her approach might have been (Jesus gave no word of command), God chose to heal her. The healing was immediate, and she could even feel the healing in her body (5:29).

5:30-34. *Jesus' response to the woman's touch.* In what appears as something of a comical scene, Jesus stops the whole procession to question what just happened, for He was aware of the power that had proceeded from Him. He undoubtedly knew what was taking place and even the woman that had touched Him (recall Mk 2:8 and see Lk 9:47). The disciples are startled that He would even be asking a question like "Who touched Me?", when obviously there were many touching Him as He moved among the crowd. But Jesus' intention was to use this as a teaching moment for both the woman and for Jairus. The woman responded to Jesus' question by coming forward (in fear and trembling) and "fell down before Him" (5:33), just as Jairus had previously fallen at His feet (5:22). After allowing her to explain the whole situation, Jesus responded to her by addressing her as "daughter," signifying the new relationship she had with Him (cf. Mk 3:33-35). Then He clarified the true basis for the healing: "your faith has made you well" (5:34). Now she understood that it was not the physical touch of His garment that brought healing (as though there was something magical involved), but *faith* ... and more specifically, *faith (confident trust) in Him*. As Jairus witnessed the encounter, he too would learn from this. The fact that the woman was restored to wholeness of life brought hope that Jairus's daughter, too, might be healed. From Jesus' perspective, however, He longed for a stronger level of faith from Jairus, not merely the doing of a miracle.

5:35-36. *Increased tension as Jairus's daughter dies.* Despite the miraculous outcome for the woman, the delay at having to interact with her no doubt brought increased anxiety for Jairus. To complicate matters for him even more, just at that point he received word that his daughter had died (and hence there was seemingly no need to bring Jesus any further). Jesus, upon overhearing the report, saw the opportune moment to both comfort and challenge Jairus: "Do not be afraid; just believe" (5:36). Jesus wanted Jairus to trust Him even more (to learn the full extent of His power), and now was his moment in which he must choose to exercise faith in the One many thought to be the Messiah. He must now apply what he just learned from Jesus' healing of the woman with the

hemorrhage.

5:37-43. *The miraculous healing of Jairus's daughter.* Jesus was not looking to amaze the crowds; this healing was for the benefit of Jairus, the synagogue official. In fact, He limited even the disciples from proceeding further, taking with Him only the "inner circle," i.e., Peter, James and John (cf. Mk 9:2; 14:33). When they reached Jairus' home, the elaborate ritual of Jewish mourning had already begun, and the commotion included the weeping and wailing of hired "mourners" (cf. Jer 9:17; Amos 5:16). Having entered the house, Jesus rebuked the mourners making all the commotion, saying, "the child is not dead, but asleep." [There is debate among scholars as to whether Jesus meant she was simply in a coma or whether He was describing death as sleep (between death and resurrection). Or possibly He was saying that in this case, death was *like* sleep from which she would recover ... not final and irrevocable (cf. Jn 11:11-14)]. In any case, they laughed scornfully at what He said, for they were certain she was dead and would not live again. Yet their laughter--so inappropriately directed at the Creator God of the universe--did not deter Jesus in the least.

Putting everyone out but her parents and His disciples, Jesus uttered "Talitha koum," Aramaic meaning, "Little girl, I say to you, get up." Mark explained the meaning of the Aramaic words for his primarily Roman audience to whom he wrote. [Peter, who had been there to witness this, clearly remembered the exact words Jesus spoke, and Mark probably obtained this from him].

The girl was immediately healed which astounded all those present in the room. Yet Jesus gave strict orders for them not to tell others, as He did not want the miracle to attract people to Him for the wrong reasons. Not surprisingly however (being the daughter of the synagogue official), Matthew reports that "the news of this spread throughout that region" (Matt 9:26). This display of His authority over death served to foreshadow Jesus' raising of Lazarus and eventually His own resurrection from the dead. If earlier miracles portrayed Him as Lord over disease, demons and nature, this miracle portrayed his as Lord over death itself.

We can be sure that God sovereignly ordained these events, meaning that it was no accident that the woman with the hemorrhage was healed just as Jesus was on His way to heal Jairus's daughter. After all, He did not have to go there in person for the daughter to be healed; He could have simply given the command (cf. Matt 8:5-13). This suggests that Jesus intended to use the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage (and her faith) to better prepare Jairus for what he was to experience. We cannot know for sure, but perhaps Jairus's coming to Jesus was motivated as much by desperation as by faith, although it certainly took some degree of humility and courage to have made even that step, given his prominent standing in the community and undoubtedly being familiar with the controversy surrounding Jesus.

Question 7

Obviously the woman with the hemorrhage was not healed on account of touching Jesus (though she may have mistakenly thought there was a connection). His comment to her in Mk 5:34 clarifies this point. What, then, was the key to this woman's healing? How does this add to the

remainder of the story with Jairus in vv 35-43? Try to describe the importance of “faith” in this three-part story, and then contrast this with the disciples’ lack of faith in Mk 4:35-41. What is Jesus looking for in those who follow Him?

Question 8

One final thing worth observing is the instruction that Jesus gives the family after the daughter is raised. Read Mk 5:43 and then contrast this with the instructions to the man who had been demon-possessed in Mk 5:19. How do you account for this contrast?

Topic 4 -- Conclusion: Jesus’ Rejection at Nazareth (6:1-6a)

Parallel Passages: Mt 13:53-58

This last story at the beginning of chapter six brings to a completion phase two of Jesus’ Galilean ministry that had begun in Mk 3:7. The scene now returns to His village of upbringing, Nazareth, at a synagogue service on the Sabbath. Will He find faith among those who should have known Him the best? The people of Nazareth were well-acquainted with Jesus’ earthly family, though Joseph, Mary’s husband after conceiving Jesus, is not mentioned (perhaps he had died by this point). Yet four of His brothers are named, and reference is made to His sisters. Apparently, they did not accept His messianic identity during Jesus’ public ministry (cf. Mk 3:21, 31-35). Of the four brothers, James eventually believed and became the leader of the Jerusalem church in the first century A.D. (cf. Gal 2 and Acts 15). Jude wrote the NT epistle bearing his name. In Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, Mary (later in church history) came to be considered “ever virgin,” the explanation being that Jesus’ siblings were half-brothers and half-sisters. Yet there is no evidence for this, and the plain sense of Mk 6:3 is that they were the natural children of Joseph and Mary.¹ Following Jesus’ birth, Mary went on to have natural sexual relations and bore children.

¹ The argument that “brother” (Gk *adelphos*) means “cousin” in Mk 6:3 is also not convincing. There is a distinct word for “cousin” in Greek (*anepsios*), which occurs in Col 4:10. In the OT, since Hebrew had no distinct

Question 9

The conclusion of the people of Nazareth is that Jesus is nothing more than “the carpenter,” just like Joseph had been (note vs 3). Despite their conclusion about Him, what admission do they make about Jesus in verse two? Would you say that they were self-condemning?

Question 10

Read Mk 6:5-6a again. Once again, we see a focus on the issue of faith in response to who He is. We have seen this in every story of Lesson 4 except for the deliverance of the demon-possessed man. Yet even there, he had to respond in faith to Jesus’ instructions to be a witness to the people of the Decapolis region. Try to write out a principle that you learn from these verses in Mk 6:5-6a that describe the relationship between faith and the works that Jesus does. What is the danger of *unbelief*?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

word for “cousin,” this relationship was expressed as “a son of an uncle” (Heb. *ben dōd*, as in Lev 25:49), but the Greek Septuagint never translates this cousin relationship as *adelphos* (but rather “son of the brother of your father,” *huios adelphos patros*).

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Following Jesus' calming of the storm at sea (Mk 4:39), what words did He have for them?

- A. He encouraged them to ask Him for help whenever a storm might arise again.
- B. He instructed them in how to speak to the wind and sea, so they could do the same thing.
- C. He rebuked them for not acting in faith in this situation.
- D. He reminded them how much He loved them and would always protect them.

QUESTION 2

Having observed the miracle of Jesus calming the sea, the disciples responded by saying, "Who then is this? Even the wind and sea _____ Him!"

QUESTION 3

The name "Legion" was a term used of a high-ranking Roman military officer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The region of the Gerasenes (or Gadarenes) was probably an area that was predominantly Gentile, since raising swine would have been inappropriate for a people forbidden to eat pork. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

After the people of the city came out and observed the man who had been demon-possessed clothed and in his right mind, how did they react?

- A. They wanted to take Jesus and immediately make Him king.
- B. They began imploring Him to leave their region.
- C. They invited Him into the city to heal other people and cast out demons.
- D. They brought gifts to Jesus and His disciples to express their thanks for the miracle.

QUESTION 6

There are several reasons to believe that the story of Jairus and the story of the woman with the hemorrhage are closely connected and meant to be read together. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

What was Jairus's position in society?

- A. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
- B. He was a Jewish tax collector who collected taxes for Rome.
- C. He was a fisherman from Capernaum.
- D. He was a synagogue official.

QUESTION 8

Who accompanied Jesus into the room where Jairus's daughter was lying on her death bed?

- A. Jairus, his wife, and three of the hired "mourners"
- B. Jairus, his wife, and three of the disciples: Peter, Matthew, and Andrew
- C. Jairus, his wife, and three of the disciples: Peter, James, and John
- D. Only Jairus, his wife, and Peter

QUESTION 9

Which of the following do the stories of Jairus and the woman with the hemorrhage NOT have in common? [Check all that apply].

- A. In both stories, Jesus addresses the female that is healed as "daughter."
- B. In both stories, the fact that Jesus heals in response to faith is stressed.
- C. In both stories, the females were bleeding which rendered them ceremonially "unclean."
- D. In both stories, the healing takes place following the command of Jesus to be healed.

QUESTION 10

Since the people of Nazareth treated Jesus as merely a carpenter with no special status and took offense at Him, Jesus did no miracles in that city. *True or False?*

Lesson 4 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Up to this point in the story, they had not only observed Him as Teacher, but they had ample opportunity to observe the miracles that He had done (both healings and casting out of demons). They believed that He was the promised Messiah (cf. John 1:41, 49). However, they had not fully come to grips with who He truly was, i.e., that He was the Lord Himself, the Creator God. [This seems to be the point of their startled reaction and question in vs 41]. Furthermore, they did not fully comprehend His commitment to them. This is reflected in their question in vs 38, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Because of their faulty view of who He was and the total commitment He had to them, they were not prepared to handle this crisis at sea in the right way (by turning to Him in utter faith). The Lord, however, uses this incident to reveal *the shallowness of their faith*, as well as to demonstrate His power over nature so that they would learn from this.

QUESTION 2:

I think we must be forgiving of the disciples in the way they handled this crisis. Theirs was a growing faith, and most likely we would not have done any better than they did. As we read the story today, we can clearly see that Jesus has all power, for even the elements of nature must obey Him. If He can merely speak and nature must obey Him, then He can do the same in any and every situation we might face. Everything is subject to His command. I would have counseled the disciples not to have looked at their situation through “human eyes” only (as though Jesus only had limited power). When we do that, we will certainly experience *fear*, because we don’t really know who is in control. I would counsel them to get a clear view of who Jesus really is--that everything is subject to Him--and then to call on Him in faith to rescue them (because He does care about them!).

QUESTION 3:

In the Old Testament, God could empower prophets and special people to do miraculous things (e.g., Samson). This did not mean that they were God, but only that God was working through them. We cannot look at Jesus in this way, however. He claims to have the ability to forgive sins, and He commands the forces of nature. He must be the Lord God in human flesh. Just as the disciples had to go through a process of discovering who Jesus was, so we today must realize for ourselves who He really is. It is not enough that we can state the answer to the question mentally, for He wants us to act in faith in light of whom we know Him to be.

QUESTION 4:

Characteristics of the demon-possessed man: (1) he dwelt among tombs where ordinary humans would not live, vs 3; (2) he had supernatural strength (broke chains!) and could not be subdued, vv 3-4; (3) he apparently lived in great torment, because he frequently screamed, vs 5; (4) he had a tendency to hurt himself (gashed himself with stones), vs 5; (5) he did not have control over his own body action and movements (the demons caused him to run up to Jesus and bow before Him), vs 6; (6) he did not have control over his own vocal cords, and the demons could speak through him, vs 7; (7) he was indwelt by

many demons, not just one, vs 9; and (8) the demons in him apparently had a leader who could speak for all of them, vs 9 (notice the words “My name”).

QUESTION 5:

The man who had been delivered was completely changed, for afterwards he was “sitting down, clothed and in his right mind” (vs 15). He was also deeply drawn to Jesus and desired to stay with Him. In contrast, the people of the region pleaded with Jesus to leave, apparently thinking more of their monetary loss because of the swine than the grace of God that had come their way. The contrast is a sad one, for they were distancing themselves from the greatest source of blessing they could have had. There are probably a couple of good reasons why Jesus instructed the man to stay: (1) Jesus had a mission for the man to do in the region of the Decapolis (a region of 10 Gentile cities that included present-day Amman and Jerash in Jordan). The man’s mission was to bear testimony to God’s great deeds and to relay what mercy he had experienced. [This probably prepared the area for future evangelism]. (2) The man, most likely a Gentile, might have been a hindrance to Jesus’ immediate program of presenting Himself as the Messiah to the Jewish nation.

QUESTION 6:

There is an important lesson for all of us: once we have been transformed by Jesus, He has a mission for us to do--perhaps even a mission that only we are suited for doing. In this case, this man was a living illustration of a *transformed life*, and the people had no logical explanation for what had happened, other than the fact that Jesus must be real.

QUESTION 7:

In Mk 5:34, Jesus told her clearly, “Daughter, your faith has made you well.” Of course, all those standing around (including Jairus and the disciples) heard this remark as well. So, *faith in Him* was the key to the woman’s healing. Yet this little minor sub-story does serve to further the drama going on with Jairus, for it is meant to prompt him to what he also needs to consider: *faith in Jesus*. Jesus does not simply want to heal Jairus’s daughter to show He has the power to do it. He wants to see Jairus exercising *faith* as part of the process. Jesus even reinforces this point in Mk 5:36: “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.” If Jairus had some degree of faith in the opening section (vv 21-24), he is now being challenged to *believe* Jesus for far much more, namely, that Jesus can raise his daughter back to life after dying. As the disciples viewed this whole account, perhaps they thought back to the rebuke that Jesus had given them for their lack of faith after stilling the storm. Jesus is clearly looking for *faith* in those who follow Him, and that is still true today. [Yet Jesus is also gracious. Despite the disciples’ lack of faith, He did not give up on them and even calmed the sea]. Jesus will patiently work in His disciples to cultivate a greater faith in them concerning who He is and what He can do. He does the same today.

QUESTION 8:

On the one hand, the man who had been delivered of Legion was commanded to go and report to others what God had done, while on the other hand, Jairus’s family was given strict orders not to tell anyone. Although we are not told why there would be such a difference, the answer probably has something to do

with the nature of what was involved. Jairus's daughter was not resurrected, but she was brought back to life--an astounding miracle! Such a miracle could have attracted people for the wrong reasons (sensationalism), and Jesus wanted to avoid that. He wanted to see faith in His followers, not provide entertainment for the masses. In addition, Jesus knew that He was on a mission in which He would die for the sins of mankind and then be raised again. Perhaps He was trying to avoid a misconception of His ministry: He was not there (at that time) to raise people from the dead, but to give eternal life to those who believed in Him (which would take His death and resurrection to accomplish).

QUESTION 9:

The people of Nazareth were in a difficult position intellectually. They had known Jesus all these years as "the carpenter." They knew that He did not have any of the formal training in the Scriptures that other rabbis would have had. So how were they to explain His incredible ability to know the Scriptures so well and to teach spiritual truth? Also, by their own admission (vs 2), they knew He had done miracles. Hence, they had the necessary evidence to realize that He was more than just a carpenter, but they did not want to admit this. They certainly condemned themselves by their own words. There are many people like this today. Even when they see the evidence, they still do not want to believe. When they do this, they are choosing a lie over the truth.

QUESTION 10:

Principle: faith is the key that unlocks the wondrous working of Jesus in our lives, but unbelief shuts us off from His blessings and grace. Unbelief is a very serious sin, for it basically calls into question who Jesus is and puts limits on what He can do. As such, it is very obnoxious to God. Unbelief should not characterize the lives of those of us who are His disciples.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. He rebuked them for not acting in faith in this situation.

QUESTION 2

obey

QUESTION 3 False

QUESTION 4 True

QUESTION 5

B. They began imploring Him to leave their region.

QUESTION 6 True

QUESTION 7

D. He was a synagogue official.

QUESTION 8

C. Jairus, his wife, and three of the disciples: Peter, James, and John

QUESTION 9

Both C and D.

C. In both stories, the females were bleeding which rendered them ceremonially “unclean.”

D. In both stories, the healing takes place following the command of Jesus to be healed.

QUESTION 10

False. [Mk 6:5 says He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them].

Unit 1 Exam: Following the Master

QUESTION 1

Which of the following statements is *not* correct?

- A. One of Mark's primary themes is to present Jesus as "the Son of God."
- B. Jesus' role as "Son" is related to the OT promise in Ps 2:7 concerning the individual that God would elevate to the role of "king."
- C. Jesus is called God's "Son," because God the Father created Him before anything else.
- D. Jesus, as God's Son, is an equal person of the Trinity, along with the Father and Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 2

John the Baptist announced that the ministry of Jesus would be more important than his own, because Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit in contrast to John's baptism with water. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The descent of the Spirit at Jesus' _____ was appropriate, because His ministry would be in the power of the Holy Spirit, and He would eventually pour out the Holy Spirit on his disciples after His resurrection and ascension.

QUESTION 4

God made a promise to _____ in 2 Samuel 7 that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne and kingdom.

QUESTION 5

Why did Jesus forbid the demon in Mark 1:24 from calling Him "the Holy One of God"? Check all that are true.

- A. This was a title used in the Old Testament for God.
- B. Jesus did not want people to know who He really was.
- C. He was afraid that the Pharisees would be upset with this news.
- D. Jesus did not want a testimony about His identity to come from demons.

Question 6

When Jesus healed the man with leprosy (Mark 1:40-45), He was careful not to touch the leper to make sure that He would not become ceremonially unclean. *True or false?*

QUESTION 7

When Jesus healed the paralytic in Mark 2, what was unique about this healing?

- A. Jesus first poured water on the man's forehead.
- B. Jesus asked the Pharisees to help Him with the healing ceremony.
- C. Jesus first told the man that His sins were forgiven (implying that He had that authority).
- D. Jesus asked everyone to join Him in prayer before healing the man.

QUESTION 8

The reason the Jewish religious leaders were angry with Jesus for healing the paralytic in Mark 2 was because He violated the Old Testament Law requiring that healings be done only in a Jewish synagogue or at the temple. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

One reason that Jesus preferred to refer to Himself as “the Son of Man” is that this expression potentially linked Him to the exalted figure in _____ 7:13-14 that would be given glory and a kingdom. [Name the book of the Bible that this expression is associated with].

QUESTION 10

More than once the Pharisees and religious leaders attacked Jesus for healing people and doing deeds of compassion on the _____ day, thinking that doing "work" on this particular day was a violation of God's commandments.

QUESTION 11

The choice by Jesus to have Matthew (Levi) follow Him as one of the twelve disciples was rather surprising, since in Jewish culture of that day, the occupation of being a _____ was strongly resented by most Jewish people.

QUESTION 12

The parables about the patch of unshrunk cloth and the old wineskins were meant to teach:

- A. Jesus was warning the Jewish religious leaders that those who tried to stop His new religious movement would become worthless.
- B. Jesus was promising new economic blessings for those who would help make Him king.
- C. Jesus was urging the Jews to rise up and cast off the Roman occupiers of their land.
- D. Jesus was ushering in a new era (the messianic kingdom) that would not merely “repair” but would replace the old Judaistic system of the Pharisees.

QUESTION 13

What did Jesus do on the night before choosing the twelve apostles?

- A. He turned in early to make sure He got a good night's sleep.
- B. He spent the whole night in prayer.
- C. He went to the closest synagogue to consult with one of the Jewish religious leaders.
- D. He personally talked with each man to make sure he was committed to the ministry.

QUESTION 14

After the healing of a man who had been blind and mute, the crowds began raising the possibility that Jesus was “the Son of David” (the Messiah). The Jewish religious leaders accused Him of doing His miracle by the power of _____.

QUESTION 15

When the religious leaders accused Jesus of His method of casting out demons (Mk 3:20-35), what were they thinking about Jesus in their minds:

- A. Jesus was a worshiper of the Canaanite god known as Ba'al.
- B. Jesus was the greatest miracle worker in history.
- C. Jesus was a supporter of the Roman army that occupied Palestine.
- D. Jesus derived His power from Satan.

QUESTION 16

In the context of Mark 3:28-30, Jesus' warning of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” was a warning that those who committed very evil sins would lose their salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

The parable of the lamp and one's standard of measure is designed to teach that the disciples need to listen and respond carefully to what God is revealing about spiritual truths, in order that more might be revealed to them. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

The Parable of the Mustard Seed in Mk 4:30-32 is designed to teach that:

- A. We only need a little faith for God to answer our prayers.
- B. Although the movement started by Jesus and the 12 apostles begins small, it will continue growing until one day His kingdom will be worldwide with many disciples.
- C. Satan's attack on the kingdom of Jesus will grow stronger and stronger.
- D. If we give a little money to God, He will multiply what we give and accomplish much.

QUESTION 19

When the disciples faced a storm upon the sea and woke Jesus (Mk 4:35-41), Jesus calmed the storm and then rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

The name “Legion” was a term used of a high-ranking official from Herod Antipas sent to arrest Jesus. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

The region of the Gerasenes (or Gadarenes) was probably an area that was predominantly Gentile, since raising swine would have been inappropriate for a people forbidden to eat pork. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

In the story of the synagogue official named Jairus (Mk 5:21-43), the story is momentarily interrupted by the woman who comes to Jesus wanting to be healed of her hemorrhage. What relationship do these stories have to one another?

- A. There is no relationship between the stories.
- B. Jairus learned that to receive a healing miracle, he only needed to touch Jesus.
- C. When Jesus explained to the woman that it was her faith that made her well, Jesus intended for Jairus to hear this and do the same.
- D. Since Jesus could only heal people who were physically present with Him, Jairus should have brought his daughter to Jesus in the beginning.

QUESTION 23

What was Jairus’s position in society?

- A. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
- B. He was a Jewish tax collector who collected taxes for Rome.
- C. He was a fisherman from Capernaum.
- D. He was a synagogue official.

QUESTION 24

When Jesus entered the room where Jairus’s daughter was lying on her death bed, five other people accompanied him: Jairus, Jairus’s wife, and three disciples (James, John, and _____).

QUESTION 25

Since the people of Nazareth treated Jesus as merely a carpenter with no special status and took offense at Him, Jesus did no miracles in that city. *True or False?*

Unit 2: The Conclusion to Jesus' Galilean Ministry and Final Journey to Jerusalem

Mark 6:6b--10:52

In Unit 1, we surveyed the first five chapters of Mark's gospel (through 6:6a) which focused on phases one and two of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Despite the miracles He performed and the teaching He gave, His ministry was met by utter rejection by the Jewish religious leaders and even rejection by those of His home town in Nazareth. Nevertheless, this did not deter Jesus from the mission He had set out to accomplish. Part of His response was to use parables to teach *truths about God's coming kingdom*. This allowed Him to conceal truth from those who persisted with hardened hearts in rejecting Him, while at the same time disclosing further truth about the kingdom to those who were responding in faith.

Unit 2 covers the next two major sections of Mark's gospel. This includes the third phase of His Galilean ministry (Mk 6:6b--8:30) and His journey to Jerusalem where He would eventually suffer death (Mk 8:31--10:32). We will break this up into five lessons for our studies. Throughout this phase of ministry, Jesus continues to perform miracles, particularly those that reflected His compassion on the needy. At the same time, He devoted more attention to developing the faith and character of the twelve, and preparing them for what lay ahead. The section treating His journey to Jerusalem contains three announcements in which Jesus predicted His suffering to come. This was accompanied by more teaching to His followers on the demands of discipleship.

Unit Outline

- Lesson 5: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part I (Mk 6:6b-56)
- Lesson 6: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part II (Mk 7:1--8:30)
- Lesson 7: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part I (Mk 8:31--9:29)
- Lesson 8: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part II (Mk 9:30--10:12)
- Lesson 9: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part III (Mk 10:13-52)

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate a greater compassion for the needy (like Jesus), and explain how Jesus used His miracles to deepen the understanding of the disciples about His true identity as "Lord."
- Realize that despite Peter's identification of Jesus as the Messiah, he and the other disciples had to overcome a problem of hardened hearts to fully believe who Jesus was and what He could do.
- Understand and apply Jesus' teaching on true discipleship, that He demands a total commitment to Him, and that ultimately disciples will either be rewarded or suffer loss for how they respond.
- Grasp what constitutes *true greatness* in God's eyes (a humble servant-like spirit) and discover the importance of eliminating the things from our life that hinder our faithfulness as disciples.

- Grow in your conviction that eternal life can only be received as a free gift through faith in Jesus (not by our works), and that honor and rewards await faithful disciples in the life to come.

Lesson Five: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part I: Mk 6:6b-56

Lesson Introduction

Mark 6:6b begins a lengthy section that continues to 8:30, which describes the third phase of Jesus' Galilean ministry (though He does make temporary trips outside Galilee as well). In this section, we see a stress on two things: (1) Jesus' compassion upon the needy and afflicted, and (2) His continuing development of the twelve apostles. This long section concludes with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-30). [Contrast the statements of rejection that concluded the first two phases (cf. 3:6; 6:1-6a)]. We will divide this long section into two parts, so Lesson Five will only deal with the first part, Mark 6:6b-56.

Now that the twelve apostles have been with Jesus and observed Him on many occasions, Jesus felt that the time had come to give them special authority and send them out in His name to preach, cast out demons and heal the sick. About this time, Herod Antipas (the ruler of Galilee and Perea) had John the Baptist put to death. His martyrdom served to teach others the cost that true discipleship might mean. The feeding of the 5000, though a blessing to many, was also meant to be a teaching lesson for the twelve apostles, as was the incident at sea when they observed Jesus walking on the water. Unfortunately, the twelve had failed to fully learn the lesson from the leftover loaves at the feeding of the 5000. Their hearts were *hardened*, and they were failing to comprehend all that Jesus was and could do. Nevertheless, Jesus continued to love them and work with them.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Sending Out of the Twelve into Galilee (6:6b-13)
- Topic 2: The Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)
- Topic 3: The Feeding of the 5000 (6:30-44)
- Topic 4: Jesus with the Disciples in the Boat: Walks on Water (6:45-52)
- Topic 5: Healings Near Gennesaret (6:53-56)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the circumstances that led to the martyrdom of John the Baptist and be challenged to follow in his footsteps as a faithful disciple of Jesus.
- View needy people with greater compassion, seeing them the way Jesus saw the crowds.

- Explain how the miracle of feeding the 5000 was also meant as a special lesson for the twelve apostles as they grew in their comprehension of who Jesus was and what He could do.
- Explain what Jesus intended to reveal about Himself when He walked on the sea and be determined to have a more teachable heart than the twelve apostles had.

Topic 1 -- Sending Out of the Twelve into Galilee (6:6b-13)

Parallel Passages: Mt 9:35; 10:1, 7-11, 14; Lk 9:1-6

Although Jesus knew that the twelve were not fully developed and still had much to learn, He also knew that it was important to give them opportunities to learn through experience. Hence, in these verses we see the twelve sent out to preach, cast out demons, and heal the sick (the same things they had seen Jesus do). This mission for the twelve seems to have been a *unique event*, and therefore the instructions that He gave them do not automatically apply to us today (e.g., not taking extra money). The point is that He wanted them to travel light and learn to be completely dependent upon Him in everything.

Question 1

Notice that the disciples do not all travel together, but neither did they travel out alone. Read carefully Mk 6:7 and then compare Mk 11:1; 14:13; John 8:17 and Deuteronomy 19:15. What reasons can you think of why Jesus had them go out in pairs? Do you think this is a wise principle for ministry today? What happened in Acts 13:1-3?

Question 2

Read the last part of Mk 6:7 once again. Did the disciples themselves have authority over demonic spirits? Where did they get this? There is a principle for us today: We may or may not be called to a ministry of casting out demons, but whatever He asks us to do, He will enable us to do it. Can you think of any way this principle might help you right now?

According to Mark 6:11, Jesus instructed the twelve to “shake the dust off the soles of your feet,” if they go to a place that does not receive or listen to them. This was a Jewish custom whereby devout Jews did this when they were leaving Gentile territory. The purpose was to

show that they were dissociating themselves from it. For the disciples to do this would be tantamount to telling the Jewish hearers that rejected the gospel message that they were acting like pagans who did not care to worship the true God. It also served to warn those who rejected their message that the disciples had fulfilled their responsibility to them, and hence those who rejected the gospel would have to answer to God for themselves (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6).

Question 3

Shaking off the dust of one's feet reflected an ancient Jewish custom that we need not practice today. However, verse 11 does teach us about being *rejected* when we preach in Jesus' name. What is the connection between people rejecting the message of Jesus and the disciples shaking the dust off their feet?

Topic 2 -- The Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)

Parallel Passages: Mt 14:1-12; Lk 9:7-9; 3:19-20

From God's perspective, John the Baptist was one of the most faithful servants of God ever to have lived on earth (cf. Matt 11:7-15). Yet faithfulness to God sometimes requires the sacrifice of one's own life, and so it happened to this great saint. Both John and Jesus were martyred while being faithful to the Father. This account begins with Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39) mistakenly thinking that Jesus was John who had risen from the dead. Other theories (vs 15) were floating around in that day to explain Jesus' phenomenal power. Even so, people today try to explain away what Jesus is doing, rather than surrender their will to His.



Reading:

After reading Mark 6:14-29 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 6:14-29

The Herod referred to in this passage was not Herod the Great who had killed the babies of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth (Matt 2:16-18). Rather this was his son, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39) and the half-brother of Herod Philip. Herod the Great (d. 4 B.C.) had several sons by different wives (ten wives total!), and various ones of them

became rulers of differing provinces after his death. The following chart lists the more notable wives and sons of Herod the Great but not all of them:

Wife of Herod the Great	Sons Born By this Wife	Rule of this Son	Marriages and Notes for this Son
Doris	Antipater II (first-born son)	Did not rule	Herod the Great had him executed in 4 B.C.
Mariamne II	Herod II (or Herod Philip)	Did not rule	Married Herodias, and had a daughter Salome. But Herodias divorced him to marry Herod Antipas (Jos., <i>Ant.</i> , 18.5.4 [136]).
Malthace	Herod Archelaus (23 B.C. – c. A.D. 18)	Ethnarch of Samaria, Judea & Idumea for 9 years (c. 4 B.C. – A.D. 6).	Banished by Caesar Augustus to Gaul in A.D. 6, and his territory came under the rule of a Roman Prefect.
	Herod Antipas (Bef. 20 B.C. – Aft. A.D. 39)	Tetrarch of Galilee & Perea (4 B.C. – A.D. 39).	Exiled to Gaul in A.D. 39. 1st wife = Phasaelis (dau. of King Aretas IV of Nabataea) 2nd wife = Herodias (who divorced Herod Philip)
Cleopatra of Jerusalem	Philip the Tetrarch (c. 19 B.C. – A.D. 34)	Tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Batanaea, and Paneas (4 B.C. – A.D. 34).	According to Josephus, he married Salome, the daughter of Herodias (Jos., <i>Ant.</i> , 18.5.4 [137]).

6:14-16. *Various opinions of Jesus' power.* The news of Jesus' miracles traveled far and wide, which led to differing explanations of how to account for His power. Some suggested that Jesus was Elijah the prophet whom the Old Testament predicted would return before the "day of the Lord" (Mal 4:5). Others suggested Jesus was simply another prophet like the prophets of the Old Testament (until John and Jesus, the nation had not had a prophet for over 400 years). Still others thought Jesus might be John the Baptist who had risen from the dead. Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee where Jesus ministered, held to this third theory. He himself was the ruler that had put John the Baptist to death. The following verses (6:17-29) back up to tell how John's death came about at the hands of Herod Antipas.

6:17-20. *The reason for John's imprisonment.* John had been imprisoned, not for breaking any civil or religious laws, but because he told the truth that Herod Antipas had abandoned his marriage to marry another woman. Herod Antipas's first wife was Phasaelis, the daughter of King Aretas IV

of Nabataea (the Arab Nabataean kingdom to the east of Judea and Galilee). Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells how Herod left Phasaelis to marry Herodias (*Antiquities* 18.5.4 [136]). At the same time, Herodias had been the wife of Herod Philip, the half-brother of Herod Antipas (they were both sons of Herod the Great but by different mothers). Contrary to Jewish law, Herodias divorced her husband, Herod Philip (by whom she had a daughter, Salome), to marry Herod Antipas (cf. Jos., *Antiquities*, 18.5.1 [109-110]). This took place about the year A.D. 27, and later during John's ministry he confronted Herod Antipas, telling him, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mk 6:18). That is, such an act was contrary to Jewish law (cf. Lev 18:16; 20:21 regarding incest). Such boldness by John, however, obviously incurred the ire of both Herod Antipas and Herodias. Yet Herod held back from having John put to death, being content to leave him imprisoned. According to Josephus, John was held a prisoner at the fortress-palace of Machaerus, located on the eastern slopes of the Dead Sea in present-day Jordan (Jos., *Antiquities* 18.5.2 [119]).

6:21-23. *Salome's dance for Herod's banquet.* Herod Antipas, on one of his birthdays, held a banquet for his officials, military commanders and other dignitaries of Galilee (Mk 6:21). At this time, Herodias's daughter (Salome) came in to the banquet area and danced before Herod and his guests. Salome was not Herod Antipas's daughter; rather she had been the daughter of Herodias and her first husband, Herod Philip. The dance pleased Herod Antipas and his guests so much that Herod (perhaps wishing to impress his guests) blurted out, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you . . . Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom" (Mk 6:22). The latter expression was probably proverbial, meaning "great wealth." He was offering her a generous gift.

6:24-29. *The beheading of John.* Salome excused herself for a moment to consult with Herodias (Mk 6:24), and upon returning stated her request: "the head of John the Baptist on a platter." Herod knew this would be wrong (recall Mk 6:20 - "Herod stood in awe of John and protected him, since he knew that John was a righteous and holy man"). Yet he was put on the spot and did not want to lose face in front of the dinner guests, so he conceded to her request. Pride kept him from doing what he knew to be right.

There at the fortress-palace of Machaerus, Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded, and the head was brought on a platter to Herodias (6:28). Mark tells us that John's disciples came and took away the body and buried it (6:29). Matthew supplies the note that John's disciples then went and told Jesus what had happened (Matt 14:12), and how Jesus responded: "Now when Jesus heard this he went away from there privately in a boat to an isolated place" (Matt 14:13).

In several ways, the death of John prefigured Jesus's own martyrdom:

- Both John and Jesus were executed by political tyrants, who although they feared their victims, vacillated and finally acquiesced to social pressure (Herod to Herodias, and Pilate to the mob).
- Both John and Jesus died rather passively--as sheep led to slaughter--victims of political intrigue and corruption.
- Both John and Jesus died as righteous and innocent victims.
- In both cases, the political ruler putting them to death knew they did not deserve their fate.

Question 4

After reading the account of John's death in Mk 6:17-29, turn back to the Old Testament and read about the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 18:17--19:8. Both Elijah and John were great men of God who faithfully carried out His commands, but the Lord had different plans for them. In both cases, an evil ruler desired to put them to death. In what ways were these two men similar? How was their outcome different? What can we learn from this about God's ways?

Question 5

According to Mk 6:20, what did Herod think of John? Did he want to put John to death? According to Mk 6:26, why then did Herod have John beheaded? What is Herod controlled by?

Topic 3 -- The Feeding of the 5000 (6:30-44)

Parallel Passages: Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-21

The feeding of the 5000 is the first of two miraculous public feedings that Jesus performed (cf. Mk 8:1-10 for the feeding of the 4000). However, both the context and following verses suggest that the miracle is just as much a teaching lesson for the twelve as it is an act of compassion on the masses. Unfortunately, it seems to have been another lesson in which they failed (note esp. Mk 6:52; 8:14-21). The episode begins on a positive note for the twelve (Mk 6:30-31) when they report back to Jesus from the mission He had sent them on (recall 6:6b-13). The words in Mk 6:30 ("all that they had done and taught") suggest that they had been faithful and had experienced some degree of success on that mission. They probably returned a bit tired.

Considering the way Mark structured his material (sandwiching the account of John's martyrdom [6:14-29] between the sending out of the twelve [6:6b-13] and the return of the twelve [6:30-32]), it seems that Mark is signaling that any who go out serving Jesus must be prepared to face a similar fate to that of John. In so doing Mark subtly impresses upon his readers the cost of discipleship, a major theme running throughout his gospel.

Question 6

Mission projects can often be exciting in the process but also stressful and quite tiring. What did Jesus recommend for the twelve disciples in Mk 6:31? Even though they did not really get to

fully experience what He recommended, what benefits and advantages might there have been for them? What lesson can you learn from this for your own life?

Question 7

Read Mk 6:33-34 and try to imagine what the twelve were thinking at this point. What do you think might have been their reaction to seeing the unexpected crowds? What was the reaction of Jesus? What was He motivated by? What kind of attitude should you pray to have for people?

Notice that Mk 6:43 says there were twelve full baskets left over of the broken pieces. This was proof that Jesus had miraculously multiplied the supplies of bread and fish. Yet the emphasis on twelve also suggests that there was one basket left for each of the twelve disciples . . . perhaps a personal reminder to each of them that Jesus can always meet the needs of people, and that His disciples must learn to trust Him for such things, not just “send people away” because they create too much trouble for them. In fact, the miracle serves an example, not just of Jesus’ compassion, but also for how the disciples will be the ones through whom Jesus will work. Jesus can supply all the needs of the people, but the disciples must be prepared to be the agents through whom He does so.

Topic 4 -- Jesus with the Disciples in the Boat: Walks on Water (6:45-52)

Parallel Passages: Mt 14:22-33; Jn 6:16-21

This episode has certain similarities to the storm at sea in Mk 4:35-41, except this time Jesus is not in the boat asleep. Yet once again the whole event is orchestrated for the benefit of the twelve. John 6:14-15 adds some additional information in his conclusion to the feeding of the 5000. After the miracle, the people exclaimed, “This is certainly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (Jn 6:14), an allusion to Deut 18:15, indicating the people were drawing the conclusion that Jesus was the promised Messiah that Moses had prophesied of. Even the imagery of feeding the masses in the uninhabited area recalled the manna imagery of Exodus 16. John went on to record that with this recognition, the people were intending to come and take Jesus by force to make Him king (Jn 6:15). Jesus, of course, knew that their “messianic enthusiasm” was misguided. He would be king one day, but the time was not right, and He had

to first die on the cross for the sins of the world. So, Jesus withdrew from them, knowing that He was not meant to wear a crown before He had first gone to the cross. The note in Mk 6:45 that Jesus “made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead” suggests that He did not want His disciples mixed up in this and therefore diffused the situation Himself.

Question 8

After reading verses 47-51, how does this situation differ from the calming of the sea in Mk 4:35-41? What purpose do you think the Lord had in mind by this unusual appearance to the twelve? Was His purpose to frighten them? Why or why not?

According to Mark 6:48, Jesus “came to them walking on the sea, for he wanted to pass by them.” This certainly does not mean that Jesus was avoiding the disciples. Rather the language of “passing before them” may allude to an Old Testament *theophany* in which the Lord passed before Moses to show him His glory (see Exod 33:19, 22). Just before getting into the boat, Jesus calmed them with the words, “Have courage! It is I.” Literally He said, “I AM,” a possible allusion to the Lord revealing His divine name to Moses (see Exod 3:14 – “God said to Moses, ‘I AM that I AM.’ And he said, ‘You must say this to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’””).

Question 9

The text says that the disciples were “utterly astonished” over what they saw, but then verse 52 explains why. Do the disciples have a problem? How would you describe their problem? Do they seem to be “good students” who are progressing as they should? What is the fundamental or root problem behind all this?

Topic 5 -- Healings Near Gennesaret (6:53-56)

Parallel Passages: Mt 14:34-36

This short paragraph is a summary statement about Jesus’ ministry in and around the Sea of Galilee. Gennesaret was both a populous plain on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee (a coastal plain about 5 km long, not far from Capernaum), as well as being a small town by the same name. Jesus’ popularity was huge by this point, and His fame in healing the sick was widespread.

Question 10

Interestingly verse 56 seems to emphasize the matter of touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak. Do you think there was anything magical about Jesus' cloak that effected healing? Reread Mark 5:34. What did Jesus say there to the woman who was healed? What, then, do you conclude about the statement in Mk 6:56, "and as many as touched it were being cured"?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Mark 6:6-13 (sending out of the twelve) provides a good example that there is wisdom in working together in pairs--having a partner--when going out to do ministry assignments. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

What was the purpose in the disciples shaking off the dust of their feet when leaving a village that did not receive them or listen to the gospel message?

- A. This protected the disciples from picking up any dangerous germs in this village.
- B. This was done so that their shoes and feet would be clean when they came to the next village.
- C. This indicated that those rejecting them (or the gospel) had acted like pagans and were thus responsible before God for their decision not to receive the gospel that was being proclaimed.
- D. This indicated to the village people that they could expect a catastrophe to strike them.

QUESTION 3

The Herod that had John the Baptist put to death was Herod Antipas. What territory did he rule over?

- A. Judea and Samaria.
- B. Galilee and Perea.
- C. Judea and Galilee.
- D. Galilee and Nabataea.

QUESTION 4

Herod Antipas and Herod Philip were both sons of Herod the Great by the same mother. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

What was the reason that Herod Antipas had John the Baptist imprisoned?

- A. John had caused a riot in one of the cities ruled by Herod.
- B. John was a threat to the Levitical priests that served at the temple in Jerusalem.
- C. John had threatened to have Herod's marriage to Herodias annulled.
- D. John had told Herod and Herodias that their marriage violated Jewish law.

QUESTION 6

Following the feeding of the 5000, there were seven full baskets left over of broken pieces of bread, the number seven signifying that Jesus was the perfect king for the nation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Before feeding the 5000, what did Jesus feel and think when He saw the large crowd of people?

- A. He was disappointed that He and the 12 apostles would not have time alone to rest.
- B. He rejoiced that so many people wanted to be near Him and hear the gospel.
- C. He felt compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
- D. He was troubled that there would not be enough food for so many people.

QUESTION 8

The story of Jesus walking on the water must be seen in light of the previous story about feeding the 5000, for the apostles should have gained important insight about the true nature of Jesus after witnessing how He fed the 5000. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In Mark 6:48, we are told that Jesus was walking on the water and “wanted to pass by them.” According to the notes, what is intended by this statement?

- A. Jesus’ original intention was not to join them in the boat but to meet them on the shore.
- B. Jesus thought the apostles should learn a lesson in facing the wind storm without His help.
- C. This may be an allusion to Exodus 33 in which God *passed by* Moses to reveal His glory.
- D. Jesus wanted the apostles to see Him walking on the water, so they would do the same.

QUESTION 10

The healings after landing at Gennesaret are meant to bear witness to how popular Jesus had become among the multitudes of Galilee. *True or False?*

Lesson 5 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

As we compare the verses listed, we see that this was not the only time that the Lord had the disciples do things in pairs. There are many advantages to this method. First, they could go to more cities and preach, since they could have six teams rather than one. Second, having a travelling partner would give each of them someone to encourage them when difficulties came. Third, having a travelling partner provided good accountability when facing temptations. Finally, it also reflected a biblical principle of there being two witnesses to confirm a matter (Deut 19:15), and the people they preached to would not just be hearing one person's story but also from another to confirm it. This is most certainly a wise principle for ministry today, and we would do well not travelling alone to do ministry. Even when the Apostle Paul was sent out to minister, God chose Barnabas to go with him (Acts 13:1-3). Throughout his ministry, Paul had travelling companions.

QUESTION 2:

The Lord Jesus "gave them authority over the unclean spirits." The disciples themselves did not have this authority. They were dependent upon Jesus giving them this authority. Likewise, Jesus can give us today whatever we need for doing the ministry that He has called us to do. He never asks us to do His ministry in our own strength or with our own abilities.

QUESTION 3:

Jesus knew that not everyone would give heed to the twelve as they preached throughout the land, just as they did not all believe Him either. Hence, we learn from the example of both Jesus and the twelve to expect *rejection* when we preach or try to be a witness for Him. [But there will be some who believe, and that is why we must not give up!]. Shaking the dust off the feet implied that the hearers were responsible for their own fate, and that those who preached had done their part. Likewise, if people reject us when we try to share with them about Jesus, they will ultimately have to bear responsibility for their own decision. [Of course, just because someone rejects our message does not mean that they will never believe. They may need to hear more than once, or God may need to work in their life in a unique way to confirm the message. Hence, we should not give up on them just because they refuse to believe the first time].

QUESTION 4:

In the days of Elijah, many people of the northern kingdom of Israel had turned to idolatrous Baal worship. God used Elijah to publicly challenge the prophets of Baal, and through the miraculous lighting of the wood pile, the people saw who the true God of the nation was, namely, the Lord God. Yet after this great victory, the wife of King Ahab (Jezebel) hated Elijah and wanted to have him put to death. John's ministry was quite different, since he lived at a different time when idolatry was not a major problem for the nation. But the nation in John's day was troubled by much sin, legalism, and self-righteousness. John had spoken out against many of the sins of his day, even naming King Herod on account of taking his brother's wife for himself. So, John and Elijah were similar in that they were faithful and full of courage to challenge the sin conditions of their day. In both cases, the wife of the ruler

instigated an attempt to have the man of God put to death. God could have sovereignly protected both prophets, yet he allowed Elijah to escape and live, but John to be imprisoned and martyred. We learn from this that God does not always protect His servants, even when they are faithful. We also learn that His plans are different for each one of us: some He protects, others He does not.

QUESTION 5:

Although Herod was a king, he was afraid of John and was reluctant to have John put to death, because John was considered to be “a righteous and holy man.” In a foolish moment, Herod made a rash vow that left him vulnerable. When Herodias’s daughter asked for John’s head, Herod felt sorrow. Yet now he had to “save face” in front of the dinner guests and keep his word. His pride became more important than doing what was right.

QUESTION 6:

Jesus recommended “a secluded place” to “rest a while” (Mk 6:31). Jesus saw the need for His disciples to take time away from the pressures of the ministry and to allow for physical and spiritual rest. This could have been a time when the disciples could have shared with one another the joys and struggles of ministry. It would have been good for them to have spent time reflecting on what had been accomplished, how things went, lessons they may have learned, and most of all how the Lord had met all their needs and cared for them. Likewise, we have the same need for this today. Ministry should not just be a matter of rushing from one project to another without taking time to process and reflect on what the Lord has accomplished and taught us.

QUESTION 7:

The twelve had been absent from Jesus while away on the mission project that He had sent them (Mk 6:6b-13). No doubt they were looking forward to having some time alone with the Lord. Furthermore, it was His suggestion (not theirs) that they all get away to a secluded place to rest. This must have heightened their anticipations. Upon seeing the crowds, however, they quickly realized that they were not going to escape the people who were clamoring to see Jesus. I think they were disappointed and maybe even angered to see all the people. Jesus (just as tired as the twelve) did not show the least bit of disappointment at the large crowd that had gathered. He had the right perspective and could see this situation through God’s eyes. To Him, these people were “like sheep without a shepherd,” meaning that the Jewish religious leaders had not properly taught them or cared for them. Hence, they were desperate for God to meet their needs. As a result, Jesus felt compassion for them, and it was this compassion that motivated Him to act on their behalf. We need to pray that God will give us the same compassion for the crowds of needy people around us.

QUESTION 8:

Comparing Mk 6:47-51 with Mk 4:35-41, both events involve a storm at sea when the disciples are in a boat and overwhelmed by the situation. Yet in Mk 4, Jesus is with them in the boat (but asleep), while in Mk 6 He comes to them in the middle of the night “walking on the sea.” In both cases, He causes the storm to cease, but the Mk 6 story has the added element of “walking on the sea.” No ordinary human

being can do such a thing, which is precisely the point. In light of Mark 6, not only can Jesus command the forces of nature by His Word, but He Himself can walk *above it* . . . He is not subject to the stormy sea or threatened by it. The Lord's purpose does not seem to have been intended to frighten them, but to demonstrate more about His power and authority. This is confirmed by the words of comfort that He gave them: "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."

QUESTION 9:

According to vs 52, "their heart was hardened," even after witnessing the feeding of the 5000. Of course, they had witnessed far more than this. They had witnessed Jesus stilling the storm at sea in Mark 4:39, and they had witnessed many more miracles of Jesus. Their problem was one of a "hardened heart," meaning that they had a heart problem that was blocking their spiritual comprehension. As a result, they did not "see" and perceive who He really was. We should not fault them for their lack of perception in the beginning, but by now they should have been drawing the right conclusion about who Jesus was. Hence, they were not good students. The fundamental problem behind all this was their lack of faith. *Faith* is something that should grow and develop as one is taught and exposed to more. They could not seem to "get it" that Jesus had no limitations, and that everything in creation (nature, sickness, demons, etc.) was subject to Him. They were not ready to "graduate" with such a limited view of who He was, and therefore they were not yet ready to be entrusted with the Great Commission.

QUESTION 10:

There was nothing magical about Jesus' cloak, and the mere touching of it (alone) did not bring healing. Recalling Mk 5:34, Jesus clarified for the woman who was healed of her hemorrhage that her faith had made her well (not simply the touch itself). In light of this, the people who were healed in Mk 6:56 after touching his cloak were not healed just because they touched His cloak. We can assume that they also exercised faith in Him. John Grassmick has stated, "Healing was not effected by a touch but by the gracious action of Jesus who honored this means of expressing their faith in Him."²

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

² John Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, Inc., 1983), 2:132.

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 True

QUESTION 2

C. This indicated that those rejecting them (or the gospel) had acted like pagans and were thus responsible before God for their decision not to receive the gospel that was being proclaimed.

QUESTION 3

B. Galilee and Perea.

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5

D. John had told Herod and Herodias that their marriage violated Jewish law.

QUESTION 6 False [There were 12 baskets left over, one for each of the 12 apostles].

QUESTION 7

C. He felt compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

QUESTION 8 True

QUESTION 9

C. This may be an allusion to Exodus 33 in which God *passed by* Moses to reveal His glory.

QUESTION 10 True

Lesson Six: Jesus' Compassion Upon the Needy While Developing the Twelve, Part II: Mk 7:1--8:30

Lesson Introduction

This lesson is a continuation of Lesson Five, which highlights Jesus' compassion upon the needy and afflicted, as well as showing His patient development of the faith and commitment of the twelve. This culminates in Peter's confession of faith in Jesus, that He is the Christ (Messiah) that God had promised would usher in an eternal kingdom (8:27-30). With that understanding, Jesus is ready to lead the disciples on to Jerusalem for the final events, highlighted by His crucifixion and resurrection.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Jesus' Confrontation with the Scribes and Pharisees: Traditions and True Defilement (7:1-23)
- Topic 2: The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman (7:24-30)
- Topic 3: The Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man (7:31-37)
- Topic 4: The Feeding of the 4000 (8:1-10)
- Topic 5: The Pharisees' Request for a Sign (8:11-13)
- Topic 6: Warning of Leaven and Jesus' Rebuke of the Disciples' Lack of Understanding (8:14-21)
- Topic 7: The Opening of the Blind Man's Eyes at Bethsaida (8:22-26)
- Topic 8: Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-30)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain what is meant by the *Oral Law* and the "traditions of the elders."
- Understand why the Lord Jesus did not immediately heal the daughter of the Syrophenician woman until He first made sure she understood the priorities of His ministry.
- Realize why the Lord Jesus rebuked the twelve disciples for their hardened hearts and lack of understanding of who He is (and how we today can do the very same thing).
- Explain the significance of Peter's confession when asked who Jesus was.

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Confrontation with the Scribes and Pharisees: Traditions and True Defilement (7:1-23)

Parallel Passages: Mt 15:1-20

The Pharisees were one sect within Judaism, although they were the largest (and some of the scribes were Pharisees). One of the unique beliefs of the Pharisees was their commitment to the “oral law” in addition to the written Law. That is, they believed in what we know today as the 39 books of the Old Testament (the written Law), but they also believed in other commandments and traditions (sometimes called “the traditions of the elders;” note Mk 7:3,5,9,13). These “oral laws” or “traditions” were not given by God, but were created by Jewish rabbis and then passed down orally from one generation of rabbis to the next. [Eventually they were written down about A.D. 200, but they existed in oral form in Jesus’ day]. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this practice, because these commandments were really given by men--not God--and the Pharisees tended to give them greater weight than the Scriptures. This “oral law” (or “traditions”) had many rules related to ceremonial “cleanness” and defilement (e.g., the washing of one’s hands before eating and the washing of vessels before cooking).³ According to Exod 30:18-21, the priests were required to wash hands and feet before offering service at the temple. The Pharisees took this commandment and tried to extend this to all Israelites (something God did not command). One problem with this system was that emphasis was put upon external matters, rather than the inward attitude of the heart.

Question 1

Mark 7:1-5 depicts the setting for the confrontation: the Pharisees and some scribes were offended that Jesus’ disciples had not observed their religious “traditions,” and they challenged Jesus about this. In verse 6, Jesus accused them of being “hypocrites.” In what way were they acting *hypocritically*? Why do you think Jesus quoted the Old Testament to them (from Isaiah 29:13)?

INSIGHT: In general, the word *qorbān* meant “an offering.” But it was also used to refer to something that had been set aside as a gift for God, to be given later. In the meantime, the owner still made use of it and benefited from it, though others could not. By calling something *qorbān*,

³ Many of these Jewish practices were eventually written down in a work entitled the *Mishnah* around the year 200 A.D. See especially *m. Yadayim* 1.1–2.4; *m. Hagigah* 2.5; and the entire tractate *m. Teharot*.

the Pharisees excused themselves from giving to and helping others. Hence, despite the piety they claimed, Jesus accused them of using the law to selfish ends.

Question 2

In every culture, people today submit to doing manmade religious rules, while their heart may be far from the one true God. Think about your culture for a moment. Do you observe any situations where people are *doing religious observances*, but not what God wants them to do?

In vv 14-16, Christ spoke to the crowd in general, but then turned in vv 17-23 to teach the disciples privately. Unfortunately, He had to mildly rebuke them (vs 18) for their lack of understanding. The problem, as Jesus saw it, was not the foods that went in the stomach, but the evil things that came out of man's heart. The parenthetical comment in Mk 7:19 ("This means all foods are clean") was probably not understood until after Acts 10, but would have been a common Christian understanding by the time Mark wrote his gospel account.

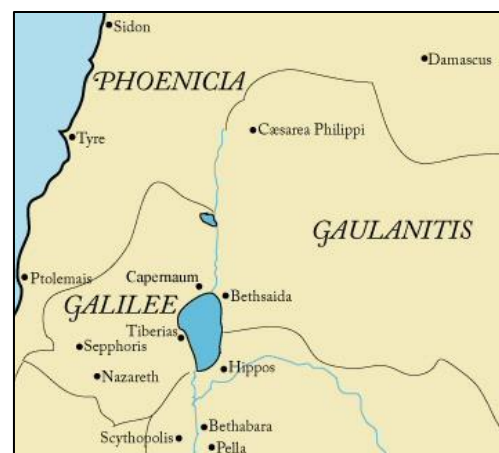
Question 3

Read Mk 7:20-23 carefully. As you look over the list of things that Jesus considered "defiling," which ones are a problem for you personally? Jesus knew that the most critical issue is the condition of man's heart. Now meditate on Colossians 3:12-14 for a moment. This is a picture of what God wants our heart to be like. Which one of these do you feel that you need help with today? [Reminder: only God can change our hearts to be like His, and that is where the Holy Spirit comes in. We must learn to submit to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to fill us; then He can do His work of *renewing* us].

Topic 2 -- The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman (7:24-30)

Parallel Passages: Mt 15:21-28

Tyre (modern *Sur*) was located on the Mediterranean coast in the Gentile area of Phoenicia (present-day southern Lebanon). Although most of Jesus' ministry



focused on the Jewish people (giving them the chance to believe He was the promised Messiah), here we see His ministry of grace to a Gentile woman with a demon-possessed daughter. This is a reminder that God loves all people in all nations, in keeping with His plan to *bless* all the people groups of the world (Genesis 12:3). According to Mk 7:24, Jesus (and probably His disciples with Him) “entered a house” and “wanted no one to know of it.” This suggests that Jesus went to Tyre (outside of Palestine), not to do public ministry, but to secure some privacy and time alone for instructing His disciples (recall Mk 6:30-31).



Reading:

This short story can be easily misunderstood. Therefore, it is important that you read Mark 7:24-30 and the commentary for these verses before answering Question 4.

Commentary: Mark 7:24-30

7:24. *Trip to the region of Tyre.* The city of Tyre lay on the Phoenician coast about 40km south of Sidon. A very ancient Mediterranean seaport city, Tyre was conquered by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. after a seven-month siege. Tyre was later annexed to the Roman province of Syria in 64 B.C., and by that time had reestablished itself as a major commercial and trade center of the region. That Jesus would go there at all was unusual, given that Tyre was a Gentile area that lay outside Palestine. By a straight line, the distance between Capernaum and Tyre was about 56 km. More likely, however, the journey from Capernaum to Tyre would probably have involved a difficult trek of 70 km or more (if one went by major roads of that time), much of which would have been through rugged mountainous country. The exact location where Jesus went is not specified, and Matthew notes that Jesus’ trip was to “the district of Tyre and Sidon” (Matt 15:21), both regarded as notorious cities (Matt 11:21-22). At least some of His disciples were with Him according to Matt 15:23. His purpose in going there was not for public ministry but to secure privacy. According to Mk 7:24, Jesus (and His disciples) found a house to seek refuge in, and He “did not want anyone to know.” Probably this trip was meant as an opportunity for them to rest and for Jesus to have some time alone with them. Nevertheless, word of His being there soon got out.

7:25-26. *The appeal of the Syrophenician woman.* One person who heard of His presence there and quickly sought Him out was an unnamed woman of the area whose little daughter was demon-possessed. Having come to Him and desperate for His help, she humbly fell at His feet. Jesus, of course, had gained a reputation for casting out demonic spirits, and she hoped He would be able to do so for her. Yet she was not Jewish but a Gentile. Mark notes that she was of the Syrophenician race (i.e., born in Phoenicia which was part of the Roman province of Syria). Matthew calls her a “Canaanite woman,” since Phoenicia had historically been a Canaanite area (Matt 15:22). According to Mk 7:26, she “kept asking Him” to cast the demon out, and the verb tense implies that she repeatedly said this. Matthew is more explicit of what she said: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is horribly demon-possessed!” (Matt 15:22). In calling Him “Son of David,” this implies she had some knowledge of Jesus and that He had come

as Messiah in fulfillment of the kingdom promise to David (recall Matt 12:23).

7:27. *Jesus' initial reluctance to help.* Matthew records that Jesus did not answer her at first and that the disciples implored Him to send her away (she kept shouting at them). Though Jesus was initially silent, He did not heed the advice of the disciples to send her away. Finally, Jesus did speak to her. Matthew records that He answered her by saying, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). Since Jesus did go on to heal her, this must mean that He first wanted this woman to understand that His ministry on earth had a priority, namely, to first give the Jewish people an opportunity to respond to the gospel of the kingdom and to accept Him as the promised Messiah of Israel. Certainly, God intended in the proper time to extend the gospel message to Gentiles, as the book of Acts traces the transition of the church from being exclusively Jewish in the beginning to eventually being predominantly Gentile.

Mark adds (7:27)--using highly figurative language--that Jesus also told her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs." In this figure, the "children" are obviously the Jewish people (cf. Exod 4:22-23; Deut 14:1; 32:20), and at this stage in God's program of salvation, the gospel is going to them first. By "the children's bread," He meant the benefits of His ministry to them. His healings and casting out of demons testified that He was the Messiah that had been promised to Israel. Now was not the time for these benefits to be extended to Gentiles. But by referring to "dogs," Jesus was not speaking derogatorily (He was not implying that she was a "dog" which would have been a great insult). The word that Jesus used for "dog" (Gk *kuvarion*) signified a small dog that would have been a house pet and eaten the scraps from the table, not a wild scavenger dog (Gk *kuōn*) roaming through the countryside. Such wild scavenger dogs were considered unclean, for they picked over what was dead (1 Kgs 14:11; 21:19-24). His point was that children in the household have priority over pets in the household.

7:28. *The woman's persistence.* Despite what seemed to be a reluctance by Jesus to help, this helped to stimulate her faith. It seems that Jesus was not refusing to help but trying to draw her out and allowing her a chance to express faith. So, she took His figurative statement and used it in her reply: "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." This was her way of saying that she understood what He was trying to say and that His ministry had a priority to the Jews and especially His disciples who had turned to Him in faith. By addressing Him with a title of respect ("Lord"), she acknowledged her respect for the fact that His earthly ministry had priorities. Yet she made the point that even the household pets were allowed to eat from beneath the table what the children had failed to eat and dropped on the floor. She was not asking for much and would be thankful just to receive a little crumb (a small benefit of His grace) . . . affirming that just as the pet dogs ate at the same time as the children, she should not be made to wait but be allowed to have something from Him now. There need be no interruption to His disciples. She was implying that He was capable of giving more than what the children needed, since God's grace cannot be exhausted.

7:29-30. *Jesus granting her request.* Her reply showed that she understood the priorities of His ministry and that she was willing to accept her place in regard to that (she had humility). More importantly, it reflected a *true faith* in believing He could give her a "small crumb," the grace she desperately needed and asked for. Hence, Jesus was pleased with her reply and granted her request without even having to see the daughter in person. Matthew adds, "Woman, your faith is great! Let

what you want be done for you.” Returning home, she found her daughter completely restored, the demon having left her. Jesus had affirmed God’s love and grace for her, as for all Gentiles.

Question 4

Since Jesus’ purpose for being in Tyre was to have rest and focus on the disciples, He initially seemed hesitant to help the woman. [Personally, I think He was very eager to heal the woman’s daughter, but He wanted to first make sure that she (and the disciples) understood His priorities]. Considering His initial reluctance to help the woman, what do you think made the difference? What, then, can we learn from this story about the person of Jesus and the importance of what the woman did?

Topic 3 -- The Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man (7:31-37)

Parallel Passages: Mt 15:29-31

Upon His return from the trip to the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus resumed His ministry around the Sea of Galilee. The corresponding passage in Matthew (Matt 15:29-31) indicates that this is a summary account of numerous healings that took place at this time:

“Then large crowds came to him bringing with them the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he healed them. As a result, the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they praised the God of Israel.”

Mark focuses on one particular account. A man who was deaf and could hardly speak was brought to Jesus for healing. Yet Jesus wanted the man to understand something before healing him. Although the man could not hear Jesus, he could see and feel. Hence Jesus took the man aside privately (vs 33) and communicated with him in unique ways (touching his affected organs) that He was the healer of his ears and tongue. Yet it was not these actions but rather Jesus’ command, “Be opened!” that brought healing. Mark explained for the benefit of his Roman readers that the Aramaic word Jesus used (*Ephphatha*) meant “Be opened.”

Question 5

Notice the reaction of the people and Jesus' instructions following the miracle. Why do you think Jesus would have given this command? What does this suggest to us that He was looking for from people?

Topic 4 -- The Feeding of the 4000 (8:1-10)

Parallel Passages: Mt 15:32-39

The remarkable thing about this episode is that it is so strikingly similar to the Feeding of the 5000 in Mk 6:30-44. Yet it is also different in some ways. Recall the comment in Mk 6:51-52 about the disciples. This, together with Mk 8:10 (when He immediately gets alone with the twelve in the boat), suggests that the whole affair may be aimed primarily at the disciples and the development of their faith.

Question 6

Remember the first stage of Bible study? Observation! Therefore, make a chart with two columns. You are going to compare and contrast Mk 6:30-44 with Mk 8:1-10. In the first column, you are to record the similarities, and in the second you are to record the differences.

Comparison and Contrast of Mk 6:30-44 with Mk 8:1-10	
Similarities	Differences

The disciples seem to have had little recollection of the previous mass feeding of the 5000, and it does not dawn on them what Jesus was capable of doing. After everyone had eaten, seven large baskets of broken pieces were left over. There may be a connection between the number seven and the preceding comment, “they ate and were satisfied.” Seven, often denoting completeness, reflected how completely Jesus had met their needs, so that all were satisfied. Afterwards Jesus travelled by boat with His disciples to the district of Dalmanutha, a place of uncertain location though apparently on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee (compare Matt 15:39, “the region of Magadan”).

Topic 5 -- The Pharisees’ Request for a Sign (8:11-13)

Parallel Passages: Mt 12:38-39; 16:1-4; Lk 11:16, 29; 12:54-56

Mark now introduces a short account in which the Pharisees and Jesus confronted one another. Although Jesus had performed many miracles, the Pharisees sought a sign from heaven that will give unmistakable proof that He and His mission were authorized by God. Yet their motive was “to test Him” (Mk 8:11). Jesus refused their demand: “no sign will be given to this generation” (i.e., to the religious leaders of that generation). In Matt 16:4 He says that only the sign of Jonah would be given. This was an allusion back to Matt 12:38-40, which referred to His resurrection after three days. Mark omitted this detail, possibly because the resurrection sign was not for now, only later.

Question 7

Since Jesus often performed miracles, why do you think He was unwilling to demonstrate a “sign from heaven” for the Pharisees?

Topic 6 -- Warning of Leaven and Jesus’ Rebuke of the Disciples’ Lack of Understanding (8:14-21)

Parallel Passages: Mt 16:5-12; Lk 12:1

This episode represents one of the strongest rebukes that the disciples received from Jesus. Once again, they are in a boat with Jesus, and they are focused on their lack of food supply. You would think after the Feeding of the 5000 and the 4000--which He directs their attention to--that they would have realized Jesus could meet their every need. Jesus opened the conversation by warning the disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Leaven, when added to bread

dough, quickly spread and took over. So, this was a warning for them to beware the teachings and influence of the Pharisees and other religious leaders (note Matt 16:6, 12), and of Herod's corrupting moral influence.

Question 8

What is at the heart of Jesus' rebuke of the disciples in this passage? What is it that they are not "getting" that He wants them to comprehend? [Notice, by the way, how Jesus uses questions to direct their thinking and get them to come to the discovery for themselves, rather than just telling them outright what He wants them to see].

Topic 7 -- The Opening of the Blind Man's Eyes at Bethsaida (8:22-26)

Parallel Passages: None (unique to Mark)

In this episode, the action returns to Bethsaida (a village on the NE shore of the Sea of Galilee), the home city of Philip, Peter and Andrew where Jesus heals a blind man. The story is unique in that we have a two-stage miracle by Jesus, the only such one recorded of Him. It is probably not without purpose that Mark carefully places the story between the rebuke of the disciples' lack of understanding (8:14-21) and Peter's confession of Jesus (8:24-30). The uniqueness of the miracle and the careful placement in this context suggest that this episode represents more than just another miracle by Jesus. There seems to be an element of symbolism to it that is linked to the disciples' growth and understanding.

Question 9

Can you discern any connection between the blind man's healing and the struggle of the disciples? If so, what can you learn from this about your own relationship with Jesus?

Topic 8 -- Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-30)

Parallel Passages: Mt 16:13-20; Lk 9:18-21

This episode represents the final event (in Mark's account), before Jesus starts His march to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Up to this point in Jesus' ministry, the underlying question had been, "Who is He?" Jesus begins His probe of the disciples by asking what others thought. Yet He primarily cared what the disciples thought and what conclusion they had reached. So, He forces the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Matthew gives a fuller account of the conversation (see Matt 16:13-20). In Matthew's account, Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The word "Christ" (a Greek term) meant *anointed one*, the equivalent of Hebrew "Messiah." This represented the core confession about Jesus' identity. He was not merely a prophet; He was the promised descendant of David and the One anointed to rule the kingdom of God (cf. 2 Sam 7:11-16). Jesus then points out that Peter had not come to this understanding of His own accord, but only because the Father had enlightened Him.

Making a play upon words, Jesus told him, "you are Peter (Gk *Petros*), and upon this rock (Gk *petra*) I will build My church." By this "*petra-rock*," Jesus probably meant that Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ would be the *foundational confession* for the new work of God known as the "church" (not that Peter would be the first Pope). The word "church" (Gk *ekklēsia*) simply meant "an assembly of people," but considering further biblical revelation, Jesus meant something very specific . . . a *new community of His disciples* that would be distinct from national Israel and through which He would carry out His kingdom program until His return in glory. Notice the future tense of the promise: "I will build My church." The church would formally begin on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the believers.

Question 10

Jesus wants to ask you the same question today: "Who do you say that I am?" How would you answer this question?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Following Peter's declaration on behalf of the twelve that Jesus is the Christ, the remainder of Mark's narrative is oriented toward the Cross and the Resurrection. From this point on, the underlying question was, "What kind of Messiah is He, and what does it mean to follow Him?"

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The “traditions of the elders” (also known as the *Oral Law*) meant that younger Jews would memorize the Old Testament and recite it orally to their elders. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

What was involved in the Jewish practice of claiming something as “*qorbān*”?

- A. This was a gift that one would give to show their appreciation for their parents.
- B. This referred to something that had been designated as a gift for God, but which became an excuse for using it for one’s own self.
- C. This referred to utensils that had been properly washed and were considered “clean.”
- D. This was the name given for the Oral Law that consisted of many man-made traditions.

QUESTION 3

When the Syrophenician woman first appealed to Jesus for help concerning her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus delayed and told her the children should be satisfied first and that it was not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs. This meant:

- A. Jesus did not want to be involved in feeding the children of Tyre and Sidon.
- B. Jesus insulted the woman by calling her a “dog,” since she was a Gentile.
- C. Jesus had a priority in His ministry of first offering the gospel of the kingdom to those of Israel, and that His miracles were primarily meant to testify to the Jews that He was the Messiah.
- D. Jesus wanted the woman to know that when He miraculously feeds the multitudes with bread, He did not want any of it wasted and left for scavenger dogs.

QUESTION 4

The Syrophenician woman did not display any evidence of faith; she only wanted to receive Jesus’ help in delivering her daughter of the demon. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When Jesus healed the deaf and mute man in Mark 7:31-37, He first put His fingers into the man’s ears and touched his tongue with His own saliva. This was for the benefit of the man, so he would realize that Jesus was the healer of his ears and tongue. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Of the following statements, which one is NOT a valid similarity between the Feeding of the 4000 and the Feeding of the 5000?

- A. In both cases, mention is made that Jesus “felt compassion” for the people.
- B. In both cases, the twelve disciples were sent out to count what food there was.
- C. In both cases, the disciples are the ones who distributed the food.
- D. In both cases, twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread were left over after the people ate.

QUESTION 7

When the Pharisees requested a sign from Jesus (Mk 8:11-13), he refused to give them one, because their motive was not to believe in Him but “to test Him.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

When the disciples were in the boat discussing that they had no bread (Mk 8:14-16), Jesus rebuked them and asked, “Do you not yet understand?” What was it that they were failing to understand?

- A. They should have remembered to take plenty of bread with them when travelling.
- B. They did not fully understand that Jesus is the all-sufficient Lord who can supernaturally do through them what they cannot do of themselves.
- C. They did not understand that the teaching of the Pharisees was faulty.
- D. They did not understand how Jesus could perform the miracle of feeding thousands.

QUESTION 9

In the lesson, the suggestion was made of a probable relationship between the spiritual blindness of the disciples and Jesus’ two-phase healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

When Jesus told Peter that He would build His church upon this “*petra-rock*,” He meant that Peter’s confession about Jesus’ identity would be the foundation on which the church (the messianic community of believers) would be established. *True or False?*

Lesson 6 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

The Pharisees were making two significant mistakes. First, they added a lot of laws and regulations to the Old Testament laws. Their man-made laws were not given by God, and this became a burden for everyone to bear. But the Pharisees thought they were more spiritual by doing these things. In God's eyes, it was legalism and it only added burdens to people that God never intended them to bear. Second, they created a system whereby they could get around keeping the laws that God truly gave (as in the case that Jesus cited regarding one's parents). They were hypocrites on both counts. They imposed man-made laws on people but did not always keep these laws themselves. Furthermore, they found ways to keep from obeying the commandments that God did give the people.

QUESTION 2: Your answer. [Make sure you give several specific examples].

QUESTION 3: Your answer.

QUESTION 4:

The woman realized that Jesus was not refusing her completely, for He only said, "Let the children be satisfied first." She responded with humility, accepting His illustration, as it were, and indicated that she understood His mission priorities. She was willing to accept whatever grace might be granted her, and she understood that God's grace was unlimited . . . it would not be exhausted by "the children." All their needs could be met, and plenty was still available for her. Her reply not only reflected humility, but also faith. Hence, Jesus readily met her need and healed the daughter. He did not lose any time, either, because He did not even have to go to her home to perform the healing. He simply announced it.

QUESTION 5:

Even before this incident, Jesus' popularity was already surging. Many even wanted to make Him king of the nation, but without the cross. Yet Jesus did not desire to be popular or to build a strong following of admirers. Neither was He content for people to merely see Him as a "healer." He was far more than that. The miracles were only meant to confirm who He really was, but some people were tempted to follow Him just for the thrill of it all. In contrast, Jesus was looking for people to respond to Him *in faith*, and who would, in turn, give up all to become one of His disciples.

QUESTION 6:

Feeding of the 5000 Compared with the Feeding of the 4000

Comparison and Contrast of Mk 6:30-44 with Mk 8:1-10	
<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In both cases a “large crowd” assembles.2. In both cases mention is made that Jesus “felt compassion” for the people.3. In both cases the disciples react to the problem by focusing on the lack of resources.4. In both cases, Jesus sends the disciples to go out and count what food they have. [Five loaves and two fish in Mk 6, seven loaves and “a few small fish” in Mk 8].5. In both accounts, the people are made to sit on the ground (things are done orderly).6. In both accounts, Jesus blesses the food before it is distributed.7. In both accounts, the disciples are the ones who distribute the food.8. In both cases, the text says that the people ate and were satisfied (no one was left hungry).9. In both cases, the disciples leave the scene in a boat.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In Mk 6 there are 5000, but in Mk 8 there are 4000.2. In Mk 6, the disciples have just returned from a major ministry trip, they are tired, and they had their plans for rest cut short.3. In Mk 6, the people are only with Jesus one day when He feeds them. In Mk 8, the people have been with Him 3 days before He feeds them.4. In Mk 6 the disciples take the initiative to come to Jesus and ask Him to dismiss the crowds. In Mk 8, Jesus takes the initiative to gather the disciples (vs 1) and present the problem to them to see what they might propose.5. After eating, the left-over pieces were picked up: 12 baskets in Mk 6, but 7 baskets in Mk 8.6. When they leave, Jesus is not in the boat with the disciples in Mk 6, but He is in Mk 8.

QUESTION 7:

Notice that Mk 8:11 indicates the motive with which the Pharisees made their request: “to test Him.” They did not ask in faith, but were already convinced that He was not the Messiah. Recall Mk 3:20-30 where they accused Him of casting out demons by Satanic power. Jesus did not have to prove Himself to them, and in the face of their doubts and rejection He would not. This is a good reminder that God does not have to prove Himself to anyone, and He has no obligation to act in the face of unbelief.

QUESTION 8:

Jesus asks no less than eight questions in this episode. His question in Mk 8:17 is the most pointed: “Do you have a hardened heart?” This draws us back to Mk 6:51-52. The quotation of Jer 5:21 in verse 18 is stern, for this was the very problem of the scribes and Pharisees (recall Mk 4:10-12). We might say that the disciples were very thick-headed and slow to learn. While that is true, it is also very true of us today. Yet Jesus never gives up on these thick-headed disciples, and neither does He give up on us. “Do you not yet understand?”, He asks them. What did they not understand? They did not fully understand that Jesus is the all-sufficient Lord who can supernaturally do through them what they cannot do of themselves. Although they had observed Him in action again and again, it was not getting through to their hearts who He was. They had knowledge of Him, but were not yet able to apply it to their circumstances.

QUESTION 9:

Mark seems to give this miracle a symbolic role in Jesus' ministry to the disciples themselves. They are the ones who are spiritually blind--not totally but having only limited vision. Yet Jesus will continue His ministry to them until He cures them of their blindness and they gain full spiritual sight. Notice the connection between this story and the previous conversation in the boat. In Mk 8:17 Jesus said to the disciples, "Do you not yet see or understand?" Of course, Jesus was not referring to physical sight but to spiritual comprehension. So, He takes a blind man who lacks physical sight to demonstrate what is happening in their own relationship with Him. They have some spiritual sight, but not clear visibility. When they see men, they see them like trees walking around, and cannot connect their needs with Jesus' compassion and power. There is some good news that we can learn from this, namely, that Jesus can heal our blinded eyes (our sluggishness to spiritually comprehend), and He wants to do that for us. If we follow His instructions, that is what will happen.

QUESTION 10:

Your answer. Keep in mind that although the Lord Jesus accepted Peter's confession (he was correct), the disciples still had a lot to learn as to what this meant and the demands it would mean for them.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 False

QUESTION 2

B. This referred to something that had been designated as a gift for God, but which became an excuse for using it for one's own self.

QUESTION 3

C. Jesus had a priority in His ministry of first offering the gospel of the kingdom to those of Israel, and that His miracles were primarily meant to testify to the Jews that He was the Messiah.

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5 True

QUESTION 6

D. In both cases, twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread were left over after the people ate.

QUESTION 7 True

QUESTION 8

B. They did not fully understand that Jesus is the all-sufficient Lord who can supernaturally do through them what they cannot do of themselves.

QUESTION 9 True

QUESTION 10 True

Lesson Seven: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part I: Mk 8:31--9:29

Lesson Introduction

The story of Jesus' earthly ministry clearly changes at this point. Following Peter's confession, the Lord is ready to advance toward Jerusalem for the final drama. There He will suffer, die on the cross and rise again from the dead. He knows this even before He goes there. In fact, all the material in 8:31--10:52 deals with His journey to Jerusalem. Three times in this long section, He predicts His suffering, death and resurrection. In addition to this major theme, Jesus' call to discipleship intensifies. He calls them to give up everything to follow Him and to learn what true greatness is all about. For our purposes, we will divide this material up into three lessons, with Lesson Seven covering the first part, 8:31--9:29.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The First Major Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (8:31-33)
- Topic 2: Requirements of a True Disciple (8:34--9:1)
- Topic 3: The Transfiguration of Jesus in Kingdom Glory (9:2-8)
- Topic 4: The Coming of Elijah Explained (9:9-13)
- Topic 5: The Healing of a Boy Possessed by an Evil Spirit (9:14-29)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand why Peter objected to Jesus' announcement that He would be rejected by the religious leaders, suffer, be killed, and rise again.
- Understand and apply Jesus' teaching on true discipleship.
- Explain what Jesus meant when He taught that a believer who wanted to save his own life would end up losing it.
- Explain why Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Explain the prophecy about Elijah's return and the connection this had to John the Baptist.

Topic 1 -- The First Major Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (8:31-33)

Parallel Passages: Mt 16:21-23; Lk 9:22

Although Peter rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah, he (and the other disciples) did not fully understand Jesus' mission as Messiah. Probably they were expecting Him to rule as king, in keeping with Old Testament expectations. Although Jesus will one day rule as King-Messiah, this was not the time for that. So, Jesus disclosed to the disciples a truth for which they were not prepared.

Question 1

In Mk 8:31, Jesus uses the words that He “must suffer . . . and be rejected . . . and be killed . . . and rise again.” The term “must” denotes *compulsion*--the will of God compelled Him to do this. Why did Jesus feel that He had to do this? Could He not have accomplished His divine mission of becoming king without having to go through all this?

It was unimaginable for Peter and the disciples to think that their “leader” must suffer and die, much less what it meant to rise again. Peter, however, was thinking about his situation . . . their future without Jesus around. Although Peter thought it was appropriate for him to rebuke Jesus, the Lord countered with a stern rebuke for Peter. When Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan!” He was indicating that Satan was the source of Peter's thoughts (not that Peter was indwelt by Satan).

Question 2

Knowing what we do today, it is easy to be critical of Peter and the other disciples. Can you think of real life situations where you have been more concerned about protecting your own interests rather than God's interests?

Topic 2 -- Requirements of a True Disciple (8:34--9:1)

Parallel Passages: Mt 16:24-28; Lk 9:23-27

Because of Peter's remark, the Lord felt that it was important to clarify a few things, not only for the sake of the disciples but for others who followed Him. Peter had objected to the idea of Jesus being killed. This raised the question of the level of commitment one should make to doing God's will. So, Jesus summoned the crowd to join the disciples, and then told them the commitment He was looking for from them. Although only Jesus could die for the sins of all

mankind, His disciples must also be so committed to Him that they would be willing to be martyrs of the faith if necessary. As part of this commitment, they first needed to *deny* themselves. This meant to set aside their own goals and thoughts of what should be done to focus on what God wanted them to think and do. They had to learn that it was God's agenda--His plan and His purposes--that mattered above all else.

Question 3

Try to state in your own words what Jesus is saying in Mk 8:34. Is this what a person must do to become a Christian and have their sins forgiven? Why or why not?

Now we want to *interpret* what Jesus is saying in Mk 8:35. Remember that "interpretation" is the second major step of Bible study (the first was observation). One of the key principles for interpreting verses correctly is to make sure we interpret them in context. A related principle is that we must understand the meaning of words in the context in which they occur. [Note: The word "save" has a basic meaning of "deliver," and we must be careful not to assume the word always means *salvation from the eternal punishment of our sins*. Sometimes it means that, but it often means *deliverance* from a threat, from an enemy or from physical death].

Question 4

In this context (considering what Jesus has just been talking about), what do you think He means in Mk 8:35?

Peter (whether he realized what he was saying or not) wanted Jesus to "hold back." He wanted Jesus to "save His own life" and avoid going to the cross. That is thinking selfishly . . . putting one's own selfish interests ahead of God's will. If one follows that kind of logic to the extreme, he might as well live to gain the entire world for himself . . . to try to have it all.

Read Mk 8:36-38 again. Jesus spoke of a time in the future when He would come "in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Jesus was referring to His second coming, though the disciples would not have understood what He meant at that time (but later they would). Among other things that happen in conjunction with the second coming will be the appearance of each believer before the Lord Jesus to give an account of how faithfully they have lived their life on

earth (cf. Rom 14:10-12; and 2 Corin 5:9-10). Matthew 16:27 adds that it will be at this time that Jesus “will reward each person according to what he has done.” So those who did not live “to gain the entire world” while on earth will be rewarded with far greater things to enjoy for all eternity.

Question 5

What is the danger in living with the attitude of “gaining the entire world” for oneself? In what way might a believer “forfeit his soul”?

Question 6

In many cultures such as the Middle East, the concepts of “Honor” and “Shame” have a great deal of importance. Think about Mk 8:38 in this light for a moment. What can you do to ensure that Jesus will not be ashamed of you when He comes again in glory?

The thought of Jesus “coming again in glory” (Mk 8:38) leads naturally to thoughts about His kingdom. According to Mk 9:1, some of them were about to get a taste of the kingdom right away. In the wording of Matthew 16:28, they would not “experience death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Topic 3 -- The Transfiguration of Jesus in Kingdom Glory (9:2-8)

Parallel Passages: Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36

When Jesus was here on earth the first time, He looked like an ordinary human being. That is, people did not look at Him and know right away that He was God in the flesh (cf. Isa 53:1-3). When He comes in glory and establishes His kingdom on earth, He will look very different to us. Then we will see Him in all His kingdom glory! Three of the disciples were given a “sneak peek” of how Jesus will look at that time. One of the purposes in seeing Jesus in His kingdom glory was to help the disciples understand that Jesus’ willingness to suffer and be rejected at the present time (Mk 8:31-33) will in the long run result in great honor and glory for Himself (a model for them to emulate).

The exact location where Jesus was transfigured before the disciples is not actually known. Mark did not name the mountain but simply indicated that it took place “on a high mountain” (Mk 9:2). The traditional site for the transfiguration is Mount Tabor in the territory of Galilee, located about 10 km E of Nazareth and 19 km SW of the Sea of Galilee. There is an early reference to this tradition in a statement made by Cyril of Jerusalem (bishop of Jerusalem) about the year A.D. 350 (*Catecheses* xii.16). Helen the mother of Constantine built a church on Mount Tabor in A.D. 326, and over the centuries several other churches and monasteries have been erected on this mountain. Despite this tradition, however, several modern scholars question this identification, suggesting that it is more likely that the transfiguration occurred on Mount Hermon near Caesarea Philippi, since Jesus and the disciples had been in that region (Mk 8:27). Also Mount Tabor is not nearly as high, and it was inhabited by a fortress at that time.

Question 7

Read Mk 9:2-3. Why do you think God wanted these three disciples to see Jesus this way? What do you learn about Jesus from this account?

In addition to seeing Jesus transfigured before them, the three disciples also saw Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus. Moses had been the primary human instrument for the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and Elijah was considered the foremost of the prophets. Hence the two men represented *the Law and the prophets*, all that God had revealed up until the coming of Christ. Now, with Christ, a new revelation of God’s kingdom program was being revealed, and the disciples needed to be prepared for changes and listen to what God was saying through His Son.

Question 8

It seems that Peter wanted to put Jesus on the same plain with Elijah and Moses, two of the greatest Old Testament saints. As you read Mk 9:7-8, what do you think is the purpose of the voice from heaven (obviously God the Father)?

The Father’s words, “This is my one dear Son. Listen to him!”, reflected the language of Deut 18:15; Ps 2:7; and Isa 42:1 (all messianic passages). The heavenly affirmation of Jesus resembled a similar remark at Jesus’ baptism (recall Mk 1:11), but the new element is the call to “listen.” Whatever God had previously revealed in the Law (through Moses) and through the OT prophets (represented by Elijah), must now give way to what God was revealing through Jesus.

Topic 4 -- The Coming of Elijah Explained (9:9-13)

Parallel Passages: Mt 17:9-13

The disciples did not fully understand what they experienced at the Mount of Transfiguration, nor did they yet fully comprehend about Jesus' resurrection. The sight of Elijah on the mountain, however, did lead to another question, because they knew of the teaching that Elijah would come again before everything was restored under Messiah (cf. Malachi 4:5-6).



Reading:

After reading Mark 9:9-13 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 9:9-13

This account immediately follows the dramatic experience that Peter, James and John had in witnessing the transfiguration event of the Lord Jesus. They had been privileged to have had a foretaste of seeing Jesus in His glory ... the way He will be seen in the future kingdom of God. They also witnessed the affirmation of the Father speaking in the cloud who declared, "This is My one dear Son." Yet what the three disciples had seen and heard was not something Jesus wanted shared with others at that time. Therefore, He gave them a command to keep silent. This in turn led to questions about rising from the dead and about the expectation of Elijah's return.

9:9-10. *The descent from the Mount of Transfiguration.* On their descent from this mountain, Jesus commanded the three disciples to keep quiet about what they had witnessed "until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." Previously the Lord had announced that He would suffer at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders, be killed, and rise again three days later (Mk 8:31). It is apparent from Jesus' interaction with Peter that the disciples did not grasp the matter of His death and resurrection. They failed to understand His messianic mission, and this was still evident at the transfiguration (cf. Mk 9:5-6, 10). Indeed, they were still unclear about this new revelation as they descended the mountain.

The fact that Jesus specified a time limit for their silence on what they had witnessed implies that He did intend for them to share their experience after His resurrection (even though they did not fully understand what He meant by "His resurrection"). [Take note of the comment in Mk 16:11 that upon first hearing about his resurrection "they did not believe"]. Of course, they did eventually share what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. Both Matthew and Luke later recorded the event, though they had not witnessed it themselves (Matt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36). Peter himself mentioned it in one of his epistles (2 Pet 1:16-18).

So novel was the thought about "rising from the dead" that the three disciples began discussing with one another what this might mean (Mk 9:10). The idea of a future resurrection was not new to them, for that truth had already been revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures (see Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19; Ps 17:15). What puzzled the disciples was how this correlated with their messianic

expectations of Jesus coming to reign as king.

9:11. *The question regarding Elijah's coming.* On the Mount of Transfiguration, they had seen both Elijah and Moses with Jesus. Jesus' reference to resurrection and the fact that Jesus had told them that they would see "the kingdom of God" after it had come with power (Mk 9:1) prompted them to think that the time of the kingdom was near (though they were mistaken about the timing). This in turn raised a question about Elijah, since they had heard the teaching of the Jewish scribes (the experts in the Old Testament Scriptures) that Elijah "must come first." This teaching was based on a prophecy found in Malachi 4:5-6:

"Look, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me, so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment."

The OT had predicted that in preparation for the establishment of God's kingdom, God would first bring about a universal time of judgment upon the world known as "the day of the LORD" (see Mal 3:1-4; 4:1 and compare Isa 24--27). Yet before this judgment will be poured out, God will first send the prophet Elijah to prepare the nation spiritually for Messiah's coming. Hence, "Elijah must come first." His mission will be to warn the people of coming judgment and to call the Jewish people to repentance, extending God's grace to those who heed his preaching. [For this reason, many Bible scholars believe that Elijah will be one of the "two witnesses" expected to minister in the time of the Great Tribulation (see Rev 11:1-13)]. The teaching of Elijah's coming was also acknowledged in one of the books of the Apocrypha, namely, Sirach 48:10 (also known as Ecclesiasticus), dated around 200-175 B.C.. The Jewish "Oral Law" which later became the *Mishnah* used the expression "until Elijah comes" to refer to the end times (e.g., *Baba Metzia* 1.8; 3.4-5).

9:12. *Jesus' response to the question regarding Elijah.* Jesus affirmed that it was true that Elijah would come first, but rather than elaborating on Elijah's coming, Jesus shifted the conversation to the near future when He would suffer and be treated with contempt by that generation. Long before Elijah comes, the Messiah must first go to the cross to die for the sins of mankind. Though the disciples did not clearly understand the necessity of this, the truth of this was there in the OT Scriptures (see especially Ps 22 and Isa 53).

9:13. *The partial fulfillment of Elijah with John the Baptist.* The OT Scriptures had predicted that Messiah would have a "forerunner," one who would go before Him to announce His coming and prepare the way. John the Baptist filled this role in regard to Jesus' first coming, so in one sense the coming of Elijah had already been foreshadowed in John. Jesus had explained this elsewhere: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John (*the Baptist*) appeared. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, who is to come. The one who has ears had better listen!" (Matt 11:13-15). The last sentence of that quotation indicates that the understanding of His statement required spiritual discernment. John was not Elijah, but he was *like Elijah* in that he played a similar role, and thereby partially fulfilled the Elijah prophecy. As Lk 1:17 put it, John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. But the true Elijah will still come in conjunction with Christ's second coming. In Matthew's account, Jesus brings out the fact that just as the nation's leadership did not recognize John the Baptist and made him suffer, so the Son of Man would also suffer at their hands (Matt 17:12).

Question 9

Notice in Mk 9:12 that Jesus said it is written that the Son of Man will suffer many things and be treated with contempt. He means this was written and foretold in the Old Testament. One key passage that discusses His suffering is Isaiah 52:13--53:12. Try to read the whole passage. What is one key observation you make about the Servant's suffering in Isa 53:4-9 that helps you understand what Jesus did for us?

Topic 5 -- The Healing of a Boy Possessed by an Evil Spirit (9:14-29)

Parallel Passages: Mt 17:14-21; Lk 9:37-43a

This episode presents an unusual case of demon-possession. Although the disciples had been given authority over unclean spirits and had previously cast them out (recall Mk 6:6-13), they were not able to do so on this occasion. When Jesus arrived, He instructed them, "Bring him to Me!" The boy's father initially expresses doubt about Jesus' ability to make his son well when he says, "if you can." Then Jesus seems to say to the father, "don't you know who you are asking to do this?" The father then cried out in desperation, "I do believe . . . help my unbelief."

Question 10

Certainly we find ourselves at times praying such a prayer, "if you can, Lord!" What is wrong with this prayer? How does Jesus' response in Mk 9:23 provide insight about how we should pray?

Although the disciples had previously been given authority to cast out demons and to accomplish miraculous things, they still needed to *believe* that God would work through them. They were not to simply assume this or take it for granted. Believing prayer that reflected their utter dependence on God would always be the appropriate way of conducting ministry.

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 7 Self Check

QUESTION 1

When Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan,” He meant that Peter had become demon-possessed (indwelt by Satan). *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

In Mark 8:34, what did Jesus mean when He said that His disciples must “deny” themselves?

- A. They must deny themselves the right to have any fun in life.
- B. They must set aside their own goals and thoughts of what ought to be done, and put God’s plans and purposes above their own.
- C. They must deny Satan the right to influence them by telling him, “Get behind me, Satan.”
- D. They must deny the teachings of religious leaders who are opposed to Christ.

QUESTION 3

For a person to be “saved” of his sins and become a Christian, he must “deny himself, and take up his cross and follow” Jesus. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

According to the notes in Lesson 7, what did Jesus mean when He said, “whoever wants to save his life will lose it”?

- A. The person who tries to earn his own salvation will not be able to do so, but will perish in hell.
- B. The person who wants to be saved of his sins and go to heaven must give up everything.
- C. The Christian who lacks total commitment and wants only to protect himself (being unwilling to suffer for the Lord’s sake) may gain many earthly things in this life but will lose out in terms of eternal rewards for the future kingdom of God.
- D. The Christian who is unwilling to suffer for Christ and become a martyr (if necessary) will eventually lose his salvation.

QUESTION 5

When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain before the three disciples, what two Old Testament figures appeared with Jesus representing the Law and the prophets? _____ and _____.

QUESTION 6

While on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples heard the Father's voice: "This is my one dear Son. Listen to him!" What purpose did this call to listen serve?

- A. The Father wanted the disciples to listen carefully to what Jesus taught about saving one's life and not trying to gain the entire world.
- B. The Father wanted the disciples to listen carefully to a powerful message Jesus was about to give them while on the mountaintop.
- C. The Father wanted the disciples to listen carefully to all that Moses and Elijah had taught.
- D. The Father wanted the disciples to recognize that despite what had been revealed in previous ages through the Law and the prophets, God was now speaking through Jesus.

QUESTION 7

Upon coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus instructed the three disciples not to share what they had seen and heard until after He rose from the dead. The reason for this temporary silence was probably because the disciples did not yet understand the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection and how this related to His rule as king in glory. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The teaching of the scribes that Elijah must come first (before Messiah) was a false teaching that had no scriptural support from the Old Testament. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

When Jesus said in Mark 9:13 that Elijah had indeed already come, what did He mean?

- A. Elijah came as a prophet many centuries before Christ as recorded in 1 Kings.
- B. The prophecy of Elijah's return was totally fulfilled in John the Baptist, and there was no need to expect Elijah himself to be returning in the future.
- C. The prophecy of Elijah's return was partially fulfilled in John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elijah as Jesus' forerunner.
- D. Jesus was referring to Elijah's recent appearance with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration.

QUESTION 10

In the story of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:14-29, what was the response of Jesus to the father who had told Him, "if you can do anything"?

- A. Jesus encouraged him to keep trusting God and rely on prayer.
- B. Jesus mildly rebuked the father, telling him, "All things are possible for the one who believes."
- C. Jesus told the father they must hurry and heal the boy before a crowd gathered.
- D. Jesus told the father they needed to pray and ask God whether it was His will for the boy to be healed or not.

Lesson 7 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Although the disciples did not understand the reasons why He must suffer and die, for Jesus it was absolutely essential. He was not on a mission just to be embraced as king. Rather, He was God in the flesh who had to demonstrate to all His creatures how much He, the Creator God, loved them. Because God is also holy, no human being could ever be admitted into God's presence in his own sinful condition. To go to the cross and die for the sins of everyone who has ever lived was the only way to make it possible for sinful man to be forgiven by God. As Jesus will clarify elsewhere, this wonderful gift does require that one first place his faith in Jesus. John 3:16 captures the heart of what motivated Jesus to suffer and die!

QUESTION 2:

Your answer.

QUESTION 3:

Jesus had just spoken of his own suffering and death in the previous paragraph, which reflected a total commitment to the will of God at any cost. This had implications for those who followed Him. To take up one's cross was a familiar image for those who heard Him. The Romans who occupied their country often crucified people along the highways for acts of rebellion (and people carried their crosses to the point where they would be crucified). The cross, therefore, was a common symbol of physical death, and to "carry" one's cross meant you were already resigned to die. Jesus is not stating the terms for receiving salvation from sin (i.e., becoming a Christian). That can only be received as a free gift . . . without cost (cf. Eph 2:8-9; Rom 6:23). One does not have to agree to be a martyr to have this gift. Yet once a person receives the free gift, Jesus calls him to give up all . . . even his own life if necessary . . . to follow Him. He asks for "total surrender," nothing less! To "deny oneself," then, is to abandon one's personal interests and earthly ambitions for the sake of doing God's will.

QUESTION 4:

In the preceding verses, Jesus has not been talking about salvation from sin, so that is certainly not the meaning that "save" has in Mk 8:35. In fact, Jesus is talking to the twelve and other followers who are already "saved" in that sense. But He has been talking about going to the cross and about dying, for which Peter rebuked Him. Therefore "to save one's life" means for a Christian to not be willing to die physically if God should ask that of him. This person is unwilling to sacrifice his own life in service to Jesus. If he has that attitude, Jesus says of his life: "he will lose it." He cannot mean, however, that this disobedient believer in Christ will die physically (or that he will lose his spiritual salvation). So, Jesus must be speaking metaphorically. He will lose the quality of life that Jesus has to offer Him now, and ultimately his life will suffer loss--he will lose rewards that might have otherwise been his. We might say that *he will end up losing out* both in this life and in the next. On the other hand, "whoever loses his life" (i.e., dies physically) for the sake of Christ and the gospel, will "save it." Once again, "save" must be metaphorical (unless one wants to argue that only by being a martyr can one be spiritually saved and go to

heaven). That is, for the person who was so committed to God that he gave up his life in serving Him, this person will “save his life.” He will be resurrected (so he does not need to fear physical death), but he will receive far much more. He will receive immense joy in this life for living in total surrender to God, and he will be richly rewarded and blessed in eternity. God will not call all of us to be martyrs, but He does call all of us to live as if we would be willing to do that.

QUESTION 5:

“Coming in glory” refers to the time in the future when Jesus will return to earth again (the second coming). The disciples don’t yet understand this event, and Jesus has not taught directly about it. But Jesus knows that it will eventually happen. The Scriptures teach that it is at this time that believers in Christ will stand before the “judgment seat of Christ” to give account of their life on earth, to have their works evaluated, and to be rewarded for their faith and good deeds (cf. Rom 14:10-12; 2 Corin 5:9-10; 1 Corin 3:10-15; and 4:4-5). All Christians will experience this, but only some Christians will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Those who lived with an attitude of gaining the entire world will regret what they have done. By “gaining the entire world” now, they will forfeit their own soul. That is, they will forfeit the future eternal riches that could have been theirs, simply because they did not obey Christ in the present life but chose to pursue earthly riches and ambitions. [Jesus is not necessarily condemning those who are rich; He is rebuking those who don’t live totally for God because they are so focused on pursuing earthly riches].

QUESTION 6:

While we all should want to hear Christ’s words of approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ, there will be many Christians who will not be approved. Having to experience public shame is a great disgrace in places like China and the Middle East. But can there be any greater shame than having to hear Christ say that He was ashamed of us because we lived so unfaithfully (we were ashamed of Him and His words)? This does not mean that such unfaithful Christians will lose their salvation, but it will still be a significant moment for them. Fortunately, we can do something now to make sure that does not happen to us. We can boldly proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ and cling faithfully to His Word.

QUESTION 7:

These three disciples were allowed to see Jesus as He will appear in His kingdom in all His glory. This was meant to make an impact upon them. In His first coming, Jesus looked like an ordinary man, because His body shielded people from seeing Him in all His glory. But at His second coming, Jesus will look entirely different. God wanted these three disciples to realize that the Leader they were following at that time was not a mere man. They needed to realize that the One they followed as Messiah was the One who also possessed the glory of God (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-18). We also learn from this that Jesus is no mere prophet. He is God in the flesh, and if we could see Him as He really is, we would see God’s glory (and one day we will!).

QUESTION 8:

Moses was great as the man through whom the Lord gave the Old Testament Law. Elijah is often looked at as one of the greatest of the prophets. So, by having them appear with Jesus, it forces the question as to whether Jesus is on the same level with them. The voice from heaven clarifies that Jesus is very distinguished from these two great OT men. He is God's "beloved Son," and now they must listen to Jesus . . . not Moses or Elijah.

QUESTION 9:

Your answer. One key observation is Isa 53:6 - "the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." This is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, because on the cross He had to bear the iniquity of every single person. It all "fell" on Him, and He had to experience God's wrath for our sin. The text also says that "the Lord caused" this. We may not understand how, but God the Father caused our sins to fall on Him, i.e., He transferred our sins to Jesus.

QUESTION 10:

The father's prayer certainly expressed more doubt than faith, and hence Jesus took the time to correct him on this point. Jesus wanted to make sure that the man understood the basis by which He worked and the necessary contribution from the human side. Jesus does not simply want to be the "fix it" person, as though He were merely doing the man a favor. He likes to respond to those who have faith in Him! But if the man merely makes a request for help and in the same breath doubts Jesus' ability, then it would be inappropriate for the Lord to have responded favorably. Jesus delights in helping and answering our prayers, but He does not want us to place limits on His ability. "All things are possible to him who believes," and thus we should pray with this kind of confidence in Him.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 False

QUESTION 2

B. They must set aside their own goals and thoughts of what ought to be done, and put God's plans and purposes above their own.

QUESTION 3 False

QUESTION 4

C. The Christian who lacks total commitment and wants only to protect himself (being unwilling to suffer for the Lord's sake) may gain many earthly things in this life but will lose out in terms of eternal rewards for the future kingdom of God.

QUESTION 5

Moses and Elijah.

QUESTION 6

D. The Father wanted the disciples to recognize that despite what had been revealed in previous ages through the Law and the prophets, God was not speaking through Jesus.

QUESTION 7 True

QUESTION 8 False

QUESTION 9

C. The prophecy of Elijah's return was partially fulfilled in John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elijah as Jesus' forerunner.

QUESTION 10

B. Jesus mildly rebuked the father, telling him, "All things are possible for the one who believes."

Lesson Eight: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part II: Mk 9:30--10:12

Lesson Introduction

Lesson Eight is a continuation from the previous one. Jesus is still on His journey to Jerusalem, where He knows the fate that awaits Him . . . the fate of the cross. Yet He also knows that resurrection from the dead lies beyond the grave. This lesson begins with the second of Jesus' three announcements of His death and resurrection to His disciples. This is then followed by three episodes that focus on true discipleship, and then an encounter with the Pharisees over the topic of divorce. Yes, even this last encounter where Jesus is challenged about His view of divorce provides another opportunity to teach about true discipleship. The Christian who wants to be a faithful disciple in following Jesus must also be committed in the area of marriage, for marriage is about the most important of all human relationships.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Second Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (9:30-32)
- Topic 2: Lesson for the Disciples on True Greatness (9:33-37)
- Topic 3: Driving Out Demons in Jesus' Name (9:38-42)
- Topic 4: The Demanding Requirements of Discipleship (9:43-50)
- Topic 5: Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (10:1-12)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Describe what true greatness means to God and how faithful Christians attain “greatness” through humble servant-like ministry to others.
- Be motivated to take decisive action to eliminate things in your life that might hinder you from being a faithful disciple and cause you to stumble.
- Explain Jesus' teaching regarding marriage as a permanent relationship involving one man and one woman becoming “one flesh.”
- Commit, as part of being a faithful disciple, to having a lifelong marriage and not divorce.

Topic 1 -- The Second Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (9:30-32)

Parallel Passages: Mt 17:22-23; Lk 9:43b-45

Earlier in Mk 8:31-33, Jesus had announced His upcoming sufferings, death and resurrection to the disciples. Now He tells them a second time where He is headed and what to expect. Mk 9:30 indicates that as they moved through Galilee, He did not want anyone to know about it. Perhaps this was to allow Him more personal time to concentrate on the development of His disciples, knowing that their time was growing short.

Question 1

Compare this suffering announcement in Mk 9:30-32 with the previous one in Mk 8:31-33. What significant difference do you notice between them? Does this help explain the reaction of the disciples in Mk 9:32? [This may also help you answer the next question].

Question 2

Jesus' announcement of His fate in Mk 9:31 seems quite straight-forward from our perspective, but it was not so easy for the disciples at that time. Why, then, does Mark add in vs 32 that "they did not understand this statement"? What is it that they did not understand? It might help you to compare the parallel account in Luke 9:43-45.

Topic 2 -- Lesson for the Disciples on True Greatness (9:33-37)

Parallel Passages: Mt 18:1-5; Lk 9:46-48

The first announcement of His sufferings in Mk 8:31-33 was followed by a lesson to the twelve on the requirements of a disciple, namely, total surrender. Following the second announcement of His coming sufferings in Mk 9:30-32, there is another lesson for the twelve about discipleship. This time, however, the lesson is about "greatness" and "status" before men. Jesus is challenging them to redefine their understanding of "greatness." The world's definition is flawed!

The disciples had equal access to Jesus and the blessings He could bestow, yet some would be given more leadership responsibility than others. Any such call to a key role should not be misconstrued as a call to being ranked over others.

Question 3

What had the disciples been discussing on the way? Knowing what you do about the twelve based on your reading of Mark's gospel so far, do any of them really seem "great"? What could have possibly given rise to this discussion?

Question 4

What instruction did Jesus give the twelve about *true greatness*? Some people feel that it is beneath their dignity to be a "servant." Does Jesus' teaching offend you? What do you understand Him to be teaching in Mk 9:35? If you were to start practicing this principle, what difference do you feel it would make for your life?

Question 5

Read Mk 9:36-37. Jesus uses a little child to reinforce His teaching for the disciples. How does His illustration with the child relate to what He said in verse 35?

Topic 3 -- Driving Out Demons in Jesus' Name (9:38-42)

Parallel Passages: Mt 10:42; 18:6; Lk 9:49-50

The twelve saw another disciple of Jesus casting out a demon, and thought this was inappropriate (since he had not been commissioned by Jesus). They seem to have thought that they were the only ones besides Jesus authorized to perform this miracle. Jesus corrected their narrow exclusivism, because He could see that the other man was really working for Jesus, not against Him. Jesus knew that many others would be needed in addition to the twelve to carry out the vision He had for the world.

Mark presents this as the third in a series of blunders by the twelve that showed they still had a need to *listen* to God's Son and learn what being a true disciple means. First, they failed to cast out the demon in Mk 9:14-18 (apparently, they were not reliant on Jesus). Second, they argued

over who among them was the greatest. Third, they were now being exclusivistic ... thinking they alone were qualified for serving the Lord Jesus.

Question 6

Those of us serving the Lord need the help of many others, not just in miraculous ways (e.g., exorcism) but in other ways, such as hospitality. What does Jesus promise for those who help the followers of Jesus? Do you think He is only talking about a literal cup of water? Explain what you think Jesus means.

Topic 4 -- The Demanding Requirements of Discipleship (9:43-50)

Parallel Passages: Mt 18:7-9; Lk 17:1-2; 14:34-35

This strongly worded section is not easy to understand. It seems to be primarily aimed at Jesus' disciples, warning them of the danger of letting themselves be led astray (note the continuity with verse 42). There is a connection to the preceding section: not only must the disciples have a dependent humility, but they must also pursue lives of holiness, being careful lest an undisciplined life cause others to stumble.

The references to cutting off limbs are undoubtedly "hyperboles," exaggerated statements for the purpose of making a powerful impression. Jesus is encouraging His disciples to take prompt and decisive actions to deal with anything that would lead them away from total allegiance to Him. In contrast, unbelievers retain their allegiance to the world, refusing God's grace in Jesus, and after dying enter hell (Gk *Gehenna*).⁴

⁴ John Grassmick ("Mark," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:147) explains, "The Greek word *geenna* ('Gehenna,' trans. 'hell') is transliterated from two Hebrew words meaning 'Valley of Hinnom,' a place south of Jerusalem where children were once sacrificed to the pagan god Molech (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35). Later, during the reforms of Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) the site became Jerusalem's refuse dump where fires burned continually to consume regular deposits of worm-infested garbage. In Jewish thought the imagery of fire and worms vividly portrayed the place of future eternal punishment for the wicked (cf. the apocryphal Judith 16:17 and Ecclesiasticus 7:17)."

Question 7

All of us are tempted by the lure for things of this world's life. When we become a disciple of Jesus, we must learn to be *in the world* without being *of the world*. The wise disciple discerns what things there are in his life that are holding him back from total allegiance to Jesus Christ, and then takes the necessary action steps to remove them. While these could be material things, they can also be relationships with the wrong people, sinful activities, or involvement in dishonest business. As you think about your own life, can you think of anything that needs to be "cut off" so that it will no longer hinder your relationship with Jesus?

Topic 5 -- Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (10:1-12)

Parallel Passages: Mt 19:1-12; Lk 16:18

In this episode, we see Jesus in conflict with the Pharisees again, only this time it involves the controversial topic of marriage and divorce. The rabbis themselves debated this issue, and had strong disagreements with one another about what constituted *legitimate divorce*. They thought they could draw Jesus into this debate, and hopefully discredit Him as a teacher in front of the crowds. Their motive was to "test" Him, not to learn from Him.

In Jesus' response to the Pharisees, He directs their attention to three important Old Testament passages: Deut 24:1-4, Gen 1:27, and Gen 2:24. They thought the mention of divorce in Deut 24:1-4 implied that divorce was an option in certain situations.



Reading:

After reading Mark 10:1-12 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 10:1-12

The institution of marriage was designed and implemented by God from the beginning of creation as the most important and most foundational of all human relationships. God's design was for one man and one woman to unite in a lifelong marriage in which they would (presumably) raise children that would be nurtured in the way of the Lord, so that the faith could be propagated from one generation to the next. Because of the importance of this unique institution for family and society, God carefully laid out boundaries for its protection. This included the prohibition of homosexuality as well as other abnormal and sinful relationships. These unlawful sexual

relationships are carefully spelled out in Leviticus 18:1-30. The institution of marriage was meant by God to be permanent, and therefore divorce was not an approved option. Despite the clear teaching about marriage and sexual relationships in the Old Testament, some Jewish people nevertheless chose to divorce. To those who were violating His plan for marriage by divorcing, God declared, “I hate divorce” (Malachi 2:16). This became a controversial issue, and even the Jewish religious leaders did not agree with one another about divorce (and what they considered to constitute a “valid divorce”).

10:1-2. *Jesus Challenged on His View of Divorce.* The chapter begins by noting that Jesus went into regions outside of Galilee (Judea and areas of modern-day Jordan) and as large crowds followed Him, He also taught them. His growing popularity beyond Galilee no doubt raised further concern to the religious leaders, and some Pharisees came to Jesus with a question about what constituted a lawful divorce. Mark 10:2 notes that they were “testing Him.” That is, their motive was not to learn from Him but rather to embroil Him in a controversy that would diminish His popularity with the masses.

At that time, there were a range of different views regarding divorce, although two rabbinic schools of thought tended to dominate (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.23 §253; and *m. Gitin* 9.10). One followed the teaching of Hillel and the other that of Shammai. Both schools of thought had permitted divorce, but one was stricter in their teaching than the other. [Note Matthew’s wording: “Is it lawful to divorce a wife *for any cause?*”, Matt 19:3]. The difference in the rabbinic teachings lay in what “cause” was considered acceptable as a basis for divorce. Keep in mind that in that day, divorce was almost always an action by the husband, not the wife. The school of Hillel basically permitted a husband to divorce his wife for any reason, while the school of Shammai limited it to cases where the husband found “unchastity” in her. In getting Jesus to declare His view, the Pharisees assumed that Jesus would agree with one or the other of these Jewish views, and by stating His preference He would lose the support of those Jews who favored the other view. Yet Jesus articulated a view that differed with both and yet was in perfect harmony with the Old Testament Scriptures.

10:3-5. *The Discussion of the Divorce Passage in Deut 24:1.* In asking the Pharisees what Moses commanded, Jesus was calling for them to state what they understood the Torah (the first five books of the OT authored by Moses) to say about divorce. As Jesus was aware, there was one passage that discussed divorce (Deut 24:1-4), and they quoted verse one of that passage to Him which pertained to the husband writing a certificate of divorce to his wife before sending her away. They took this as divine approval for divorce, but Jesus challenged them on this. The true point of the teaching in Deut 24:1-4 was not to sanction divorce but to protect the wife who was being divorced from abuse by her husband. The passage was intended to prevent the husband from hastily divorcing his wife and to make him think carefully about doing so before he made that decision. This was for the wife’s protection, as she would be left in a vulnerable situation without her husband to care for her (and in most cases the children of the marriage as well). In Mk 10:5, Jesus exposed the real reason this passage was even in the Scriptures. It was not there to sanction divorce but for those among God’s covenant people whose hearts were “hardened.” If they had not had a “hardened heart” (unresponsive to the Spirit of God), there would have been no need for the regulations mentioned in Deut 24:1-4.

10:6-9. *Jesus' Defense of God's Original Design for Marriage.* Having clarified the intent of Deut 24:1-4, Jesus went back to Genesis 1–2 (the beginning of creation) to recapture God's original design and intention for marriage. Marriage was God's design; "He made them male and female" (Gen 1:27). This reflected that there was *divine purpose* in how He made the sexes, and man had no right to disrupt God's purposes. Jesus went on to quote from Gen 2:24 to bring out that marriage resulted in the man and wife becoming "one flesh." When they marry, they are no longer two individuals but rather a functioning unity with differing responsibilities. In that act of marriage when consummated by sexual union, there is a uniting of their souls together. Hence, Jesus pointed out the implication of these verses from Genesis: "what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Mk 10:9). If one understood God's design and purposes for marriage, as well as what happens when two people become "one flesh," they would realize that this was meant to be a permanent relationship. Hence, divorce was not only contrary to God's will but disruptive of His creative intentions.

10:10-12. *The Private Discussion with the Disciples.* Apparently, Jesus' disciples were surprised at the rather firm stance that Jesus had taken about marriage and divorce. Perhaps they had thought that He might have sided with one or the other of the two main rabbinic views. Afterwards, then, when Jesus was alone with the disciples, they sought to probe Him more about His teaching. According to Mk 10:11-12, Jesus clearly stated that divorce from one to marry another (regardless of whether the husband or the wife initiated the divorce) was tantamount to adultery, because in the eyes of God the first marriage was still considered valid.

Additional Note: It is beyond the scope of this brief commentary to address the "exception clause" found in Matt 5:32 and 19:9, or to comment on 1 Corin 7:1-16. Luke 16:18 is similar to Mark in not mentioning any exception. Biblical scholars today differ over how to understand and harmonize these passages. Some understand that the Matthean passages do indicate that there is such a thing as a "legitimate exception" to what would otherwise be Jesus' "no divorce" teaching. [For those holding to a valid exception, this is usually taken to be for the case of adultery or something similar (such as abandonment). One problem with that view, however, is that by teaching "no divorce except for adultery," Jesus would have been in fundamental agreement with the school of Shammai]. Other scholars think that in the Matthean account (written for a Jewish audience), Jesus was not really making an exception, but rather indicating that the marriage was never valid to begin with if it had been done in contradiction to the commandments of Leviticus 18. Those taking this view would point out that Matt 19:9 does not say "except for adultery" but rather "except for *porneia*," a more general Greek word capable of referring to forbidden sexual relationships such as those mentioned in Leviticus 18.

Though there are great differences of opinion today on how to interpret these marriage and divorce passages, Jesus certainly taught--in contrast to the rabbinical teachings of His day--that marriage was meant to be permanent. Mark also places the episode in a context of disciple faithfulness, suggesting that those who wish to be faithful disciples of Jesus must commit themselves to the permanence of marriage.

Question 8

Read Deut 24:1-4. The passage does not commend divorce or even mention situations where this might be considered “legitimate.” Rather it only serves to protect the woman in case of a divorce. According to this passage, what restriction is placed on a man if he divorces his wife?

Question 9

In Mk 10:6-8, Jesus directs their attention back to the book of Genesis to see God’s design for marriage in the beginning. We notice that the first marriage involved one man and one woman. What was to be the purpose of their relationship according to vs 8? What does this imply about a man having more than one wife or in pursuing a relationship with another woman other than his wife?

Question 10

The conclusion to Jesus’ comments for the Pharisees is found in Mk 10:9. The final three verses of this paragraph (verses 10-12) are given privately to the disciples. According to Jesus’ conclusion for the Pharisees in vs 9 and his reply to the disciples in vv 10-12, what do you think is God’s opinion about divorce? You might wish to consult Malachi 2:13-16.

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In Mark 9:30-32, Jesus stated for the second time that He would be delivered into the hands of men who would kill Him, but this time Peter did not rebuke Jesus as he had previously done at the first announcement. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

In response to the disciples' conversation about who among them was the greatest, Jesus taught them that the one who wanted to be first must be the last of all and the _____ of all.

QUESTION 3

To teach the disciples about true greatness, Jesus took a small child in His arms. By doing this, what was Jesus conveying to the disciples? *[Check all that apply].*

- A. The disciples must not consider anyone as being unimportant or too insignificant, but be willing to serve and care for the needs of everyone.
- B. Whenever the disciples saw children in the streets, they should take them in their arms.
- C. The way the disciples treated others reflected how they cared for Jesus Himself.
- D. The disciples should not just seek to spend time with prestigious people in society.

QUESTION 4

When the disciples tried to prevent someone casting out demons in Jesus' name (Mk 9:38), this was the first mistake that any of them had made since Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When Jesus instructed the disciples to cut off their hand if it caused them to stumble, how would the disciples have understood His instructions?

- A. They understood Him to mean that they should literally cut off their hand.
- B. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as "hyperbole," and that what He truly meant was for them to take decisive action to correct the problem or sin.
- C. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as "symbolism," and that what He truly meant was for them to wash their hands as a religious ritual.
- D. They understood that Jesus was instructing them not to touch anything "unclean," with their hands, so that they would not be defiled.

QUESTION 6

In Mark 9:42-50, Jesus taught that no matter how painful it might be to deal with the problems in our life that cause us to stumble, that was still a lot less painful than entering “hell” (Gk *Gehenna*). *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

At the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry in the first century A.D., all the Jewish rabbis held to the same view regarding divorce. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

What is the primary Old Testament passage dealing with regulations about divorce?

- A. Genesis 1:27
- B. Leviticus 18:1-30
- C. Deuteronomy 24:1-4
- D. Malachi 2:16

QUESTION 9

According to Jesus, why did God place these regulations about divorce in the Old Testament?

- A. To clarify that people were free to divorce, if they did not like their marriage.
- B. To prevent people from being married to more than one person at the same time.
- C. To indicate that if one of the partners committed adultery, the couple must get a divorce.
- D. To protect the wife who might be made to suffer because of a husband hastily seeking to divorce her due to his hardness of heart.

QUESTION 10

In Jesus’ teaching about divorce, the accounts in both Matthew and Mark make no mention of any exception to the prohibition about divorce, but Luke 16:18 records an exception that Jesus made in the case of “immorality” (*porneia*). *True or False?*

Lesson 8 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

The more noticeable difference is the lack in the second announcement of any challenge by Peter. In Mk 8:31-33, Peter clearly understood that the Lord was saying He would be killed at the hands of the religious leaders. That's precisely why Peter tried to rebuke the Lord. Peter apparently had learned his lesson and did not try to challenge the Lord the second time. Having watched the Lord sternly rebuke Peter on the previous occasion, this may explain why the other disciples were afraid to even ask Jesus about this in Mk 9:32. They did not fully understand, but they did not want to risk saying the wrong thing (as Peter had done).

QUESTION 2:

We also note in Mk 8:32 that Jesus "was stating the matter plainly." The announcement of His death and resurrection was not veiled in a parable. As noted above, they at least understood Jesus to have said that He would suffer and be killed by the religious leaders, since that is the very thing that prompted Peter to speak up. The parallel account in Lk 9:43-45 adds an additional detail not found in Mark: "it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it." Considering all this information, I think we are forced to conclude that they understood Jesus to be predicting His death. Probably what they struggled to understand was not the "what" but the "why." That is, they could not understand how His death and rising again logically made sense from the perspective of *their anticipation* that Messiah would put down all enemies and reign triumphantly (as many Old Testament passages had depicted Him).

QUESTION 3:

The disciples had vainly been discussing which of them was "the greatest." That seems almost ironic in a way, because in Mark's gospel none of them have acted as a *great person*. In fact, their behavior has been just the opposite. They have made numerous mistakes, and have repeatedly failed to comprehend things at the spiritual level. So why were they even talking like this? Possibly, Jesus' teaching about the kingdom and the disclosure of Himself in kingdom glory (recall Mk 9:2ff.) was prompting them to think about the role they would have in this. Also, the fact that three of them were chosen to see Jesus in His kingdom glory might have made them think they were more special than the rest.

QUESTION 4:

Jesus taught that true greatness was to be found in two qualities. First, people who are great in His kingdom delight in being "last of all" (rather than pushing oneself to the front or ahead of others). They are not living just to promote themselves and always doing what is best for themselves, but they help others. Second, they see themselves as "servants." This word in the Greek, by the way, is not the word for a slave, but is the word from which we get "deacon." It depicts one who attends to the needs of others freely, that is, ministering to and caring for the needs of others. In fact, Jesus says they are to be "servants of all," not just to those who are important in society, but even to the least significant. To practice these principles would mean to live a lot less self-centered.

QUESTION 5:

In verse 35, Jesus spoke of being “last of all” and “servant of all.” We observe that the words “of all” are repeated, suggesting that He means *all other people*, regardless of their position in society or the worth that the world puts upon them. In the culture of their day, a little child was not looked upon as being of much importance. They are of course “precious,” but not looked upon as being mature adults. So, Jesus uses the small child as a token of someone who was not regarded as being that important. Taking the child in His arms was a way of signifying His care and regard for the child. So, Jesus taught that welcoming the little child (and caring for his needs) was like doing this for Jesus Himself and even God the Father (who sent Jesus). We should not just be servants to important people in society (who have the means and influence to repay us) but to all, even the lowliest of people.

QUESTION 6:

As we follow and serve Jesus Christ, there will be others who help us along the way . . . sometimes in big ways and sometimes in small. The promise is that if anyone even does so much as give us a cup of water to drink, they will be rewarded. The promise is certainly not limited to or even primarily concerned about literal cups of water. In the Middle East, to receive a cup of cool refreshing water when one was thirsty meant to be refreshed and strengthened. Therefore, the promise seems to be aimed at any deed that someone might do to refresh or strengthen those serving Jesus. As a result, that person will be rewarded by Jesus. The promise is that he will not lose the reward, which suggests that the reward is an eternal one in the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

QUESTION 7: Your answer.

QUESTION 8:

This passage should not be used to prove that the Old Testament sanctioned divorce. That is not the intention of Deut 24:1-4. In the Ancient Near East, women could be easily abused by their husbands. If a husband decided he did not like his wife and therefore wanted to divorce her, this could mean terrible suffering for the woman. The man was the primary provider, and a divorced woman would likely be poor and unable to provide for her needs (and those of her children). Naturally she would hope to remarry. But if she did and anything happened to that second marriage, the first husband was not allowed to take her as a wife again. This passage was intended to prevent hasty divorces, so that a husband would be very cautious about divorcing his wife.

QUESTION 9:

According to Mk 10:8 (taken from Genesis 2:24), the man and the woman are to become “one flesh.” This does not simply mean that they join in physical union (although that is an important part of being “one flesh”). God’s intention is for them to experience a wonderful union physically, emotionally and spiritually. For a man to have multiple wives, however, defeats this purpose. A man was meant to experience “oneness” with a woman, a relationship in which they continue to grow in unity and intimacy. Having multiple wives would only introduce confusion, rivalry, and tension into the home. Although we see examples of polygamy in the Old Testament, we need to realize that God did not commend or

approve this. Those who did this (e.g., David) failed to understand God's purpose in marriage, and suffered the consequences of going against God's design.

QUESTION 10:

There is no doubt that Jesus took the position that divorce was not a legitimate option. Man should not separate what God had joined. In speaking to the disciples, to divorce and marry another was tantamount to adultery, because God still considered the first marriage as valid. In Malachi 2:16, God declared, "I hate divorce." As Christians, we should want to do what pleases God. If we know that God hates divorce and has commanded us not to separate, then we should never consider divorce as an option for a troubled marriage. The proper solution is to seek help to fix the marriage. That may not be easy, but it can be done. Troubled marriages also need the prayers and encouragement of fellow believers.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 True

QUESTION 2
servant

QUESTION 3
All are correct except answer “B.”

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5
B. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as “hyperbole,” and that what He truly meant was for them to take decisive action to correct the problem or sin.

QUESTION 6 True

QUESTION 7 False

QUESTION 8
C. Deuteronomy 24:1-4

QUESTION 9
D. To protect the wife who might be made to suffer because of a husband hastily seeking to divorce her due to his hardness of heart.

QUESTION 10 False

Lesson Nine: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death, Part III: Mk 10:13-52

Lesson Introduction

Lesson Nine is a continuation of lessons seven and eight, all of which survey the events on the way to Jerusalem for the last time and especially the interaction that Jesus had with the twelve disciples. In one way or another, all five episodes in Lesson Nine focus on the twelve, either correcting their mistaken attitudes, developing their faith, or purifying their objectives and ambitions. In Topic 3 we encounter Jesus' third and final prediction of the suffering He will experience in Jerusalem. Even though the twelve had accompanied Jesus this far, they still misunderstood the nature of His earthly mission and failed to grasp (theologically) the fact that He had come to die on the cross and be resurrected from the grave. Yet Jesus did not give up on them, but patiently corrected them and illustrated for them by His life what true greatness meant. He did this by being a servant to all and giving His life as a ransom for many.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Blessing of the Children (10:13-16)
- Topic 2: The Rich Man's Question about Inheriting Eternal Life (10:17-31)
- Topic 3: The Third Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (10:32-34)
- Topic 4: The Request of James and John for Places of Honor (10:35-45)
- Topic 5: The Faith of Blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the basis by which people will be given entrance to the kingdom of God.
- Realize the danger that riches can be in keeping people from humbly admitting that they are unworthy in themselves of inheriting eternal life and trusting Christ alone to save them.
- Recognize that Jesus is looking for disciples whose ambition is not set on earthly treasures but on doing His will.
- Explain how faithful disciples will be rewarded, both in the present life and in the life to come.
- Realize the danger of having a competitive attitude with other Christians and wanting to be honored above others.

Topic 1 -- Blessing of the Children (10:13-16)

Parallel Passages: Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17

In ancient culture, the tendency was to regard children as insignificant. Apparently the twelve disciples saw the children as an annoyance to Jesus' busy ministry, and therefore sought to shield Him from their distraction. Not only did Jesus have the opposite attitude, but the text says He even became indignant upon observing this. His kingdom was not to be limited to adults. In fact, those who might be interested in entering His kingdom could learn a valuable lesson from the children. Because children were dependent upon what they received from others, they represented the type of disciple Jesus was looking for.

Question 1

What is the lesson about *entering Jesus' kingdom* that you learn from verses 14-15? How does this relate to what we learn in John 3:3 and Ephesians 2:8-9?

Topic 2 -- The Rich Man's Question about Inheriting Eternal Life (10:17-31)

Parallel Passages: Mt 19:16-30; Lk 18:18-30

The episode about the "rich man" is directly related to the preceding paragraph. One only enters the kingdom of Jesus in the way of a small child, that is, with a humble child-like faith. Now we have the case of a man who thinks he can get in some other way, only to be disappointed in the end. According to Matt 19:20 he is a "young man," but we also learn from Mk 10:22 that he was rich and from Lk 18:18 that he was a "ruler" (probably a member of the Sanhedrin; Lk 23:13; 24:20). Being rich, however, is not necessarily wrong in and of itself (cf. 1 Tim 6:17-19). The fact that he is rich is not the *cause* of his not entering the kingdom. He is self-deluded in several ways and fails to see that he cannot obtain eternal life through human endeavor . . . whether by amassing riches or by human goodness.



Carefully read the account of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-31.

Question 2

Although this rich young ruler was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, he appears to be different from most of the Pharisees that outright rejected Jesus and sought to challenge and discredit Him. After reflecting on vv 17-22, try to list four or five *positive* things about this person. Do you think he was a genuine seeker of truth?

In this passage, to “inherit eternal life” seems to be equivalent with *entering* the kingdom of God (compare vs 17 with vs 23). Also note vs 30 which views receiving eternal life as a blessing for “the age to come” (i.e., the coming kingdom age). In John’s gospel, eternal life is often viewed as a present possession, but in this context the focus is on the future aspect of eternal life in Messiah’s kingdom. In either case, the blessing of eternal life is only for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., who put their faith completely in Him to save them from their sins.



Reading: This passage raises several concerns related to its proper interpretation. Now that you have attempted to answer the questions above on your own, read the following commentary on Mark 10:17-31.

Commentary: Mark 10:17-31

This unit concerns a young man who came to Jesus with a question of what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Mark deliberately places the story following Jesus’ teaching about receiving the kingdom of God as a child (Mk 10:14-15) to provide a negative illustration of those who seek to come another way. By way of background, the young man was “extremely rich” (Lk 18:23), and he was a religious “ruler” (Lk 18:18) which meant he was probably a member of the Sanhedrin (Lk 23:13; 24:20), the Jewish governing body for religious affairs. He apparently thought he was living a life that would merit him “eternal life,” but Jesus helped him see that he was not so virtuous as he thought.

10:17. *The question of inheriting eternal life.* The opening verse provides the essential background information for helping us understand the interaction the man has with Jesus. There are some positive things to say about the young man. First, he “ran up to” Jesus, which suggests he was eager to be able to speak with Jesus. Second, he “fell on his knees” before Jesus, which indicates his respect and admiration for Jesus (contrast other religious leaders who came to Jesus “to test” Him). Third, he addressed Jesus as “good teacher.” Although Jesus was often addressed as “teacher” (Gk *didaskalos*), there is no record of anyone else addressing Him as “good teacher.”

Fourth, he asked Jesus an honest question, with no hint that he was there to challenge Him.

His question was specifically, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” In Jewish understanding, to “inherit eternal life” was to be resurrected and accepted for entrance into the messianic kingdom of the future (cf. Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 7:9).⁵ Notice Mk 10:30 in which Jesus spoke of “eternal life” in the “age to come.” So “to inherit eternal life” was an equivalent expression for entering the kingdom of God, referred to elsewhere as “inheriting the kingdom” (cf. Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21). The NT is very clear that one can only do this by humbly coming to Jesus with a child-like faith in order to be born again (Mk 10:15; John 3:3; Col 1:13-14). The young man’s question in Mk 10:17, however, gives him away that he does not understand the right approach, for he asks, “what must I do.” The NT is clear that there is not anything we can “do” to merit eternal life. Receiving God’s forgiveness and eternal life do not come because of what we “do,” but only as a free gift of God’s grace.

10:18-19. *Jesus’ initial response of who is good.* Jesus, of course, realized that the young man--despite his respectful approach--was very deluded in his understanding of the terms of salvation. He first needed to see himself as an undeserving sinner, so that he might come to God based on *grace*, not merit. Jesus, therefore, seized upon the word “good” in the man’s salutation (“good teacher”). Without telling the young man outright that he was *not good*, Jesus introduced a question worth considering: who really is good? [Jesus was not excluding Himself; in fact, His comment served to make the young man consider that if Jesus was “good,” then He must be deity Himself]. Yet human people are not truly “good;” only God is. Did the young man think he was an exception? Being a religious ruler, he should have been familiar with fundamental biblical teaching in the OT about man’s sinfulness ... verses like Isa 64:6, “all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight.”

Since one of the purposes of the OT Law was to help people see that they did not measure up to God’s standard of righteousness, Jesus called his attention to several of the Ten Commandments. Jesus was not suggesting that people go to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. Man’s failure to keep the Law--for none kept it perfectly (Ps 14:1-2)--was meant to drive people to grace and a faith-based righteousness that had already been revealed to Abraham (Gen 15:6).

10:20-22. *The young man’s deception and Jesus’ challenge.* The young man affirmed that he had kept these commandments from “his youth” (about age 12 when young Jewish boys had their *bar Mitzvah* [a “son of the Law”] and assumed responsibility for keeping the Law). His sense of self-righteousness, however, went beyond just the specific commandments that Jesus had mentioned, for Matt 19:20 records him saying, “I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws. What do I still lack?”

Apparently, the young man was not arrogant in his attitude, for Mk 10:21 says that Jesus “felt love for him.” This suggests that the young man probably respected the Law of God and truly sought to live his life in accordance with it. But he simply was very deluded about how short he

⁵ During the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C., one young Jewish man replied with his last breath to those torturing him, “You ... are making us depart from our present life, but the King of the universe will resurrect us, who die for the sake of His laws, to a new eternal life” (2 Macc 7:9).

fell below God's standard of righteousness. Was he really willing to do whatever God might ask of Him? To help the young man realize that his willingness to obey God had limits, Jesus put a question to him that would help him see that he was not willing to "do" anything and everything asked of him. To "go and sell all he possessed and give that to the poor" to come and follow Jesus was too high a demand. Jesus had chosen this test (rather than a different one), because He could see into the man's heart and know that his riches and possessions "owned him." Mark concluded, "the man looked sad and went away sorrowful, for he was very rich" (10:22).

To be clear, Jesus was not trying to teach that one must sell all their earthly possessions to be His disciple, much less to inherit eternal life. The man wanted to have eternal life based on what he could "do," and Jesus brought him to the point where he should have seen that "doing" would not work. God's standard of obedience was not only beyond his capability, it was also beyond what he was willing to submit to.

10:23-25. *The difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom.* Following the rich young man's departure, Jesus commented to His disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" By this, Jesus was not saying that rich people could not be saved. His point was that people with riches are often people who feel independent (are prone to self-effort) and perhaps too self-righteous to see themselves as undeserving sinners whose only hope is the grace of God. His statement confounded His disciples, because they followed the common Jewish thinking that being rich was a sign of God's favor on a person. Jesus repeated the difficulty of a rich person entering the kingdom of God three times in vv 23-25, and underscored this by referring to a Jewish proverb illustrating that which is impossible (that a camel could pass through the eye of a common sewing needle). This was meant to impress upon His disciples that their allegiance must be to Him, and if they were going to continue following Him, they could not do so and be consumed with earthly possessions and riches at the same time. [Applicationally, the issue here is not so much *how much* a person has, but what are they living for? Is Jesus really the first priority in their lives?].

10:26-27. *The disciple's perplexion at Jesus' comments on the rich.* So flabbergasted were the disciples at Jesus' perspective of the rich that they blurted out, "Then who can be saved?" In other words, if people in the Jewish culture that were rich because of God's blessing upon them (implying that they had lived righteously), then what hope was there for others? Their question reflected a form of *retribution theology*: if a person is suffering, it must be because they have sinned; and if a person is prospering, it must be because they have lived a life pleasing to God. Yet that is not true biblical theology. Jesus answered the disciples by stating, "This is impossible for mere humans, but not for God" (10:27). For every single person--rich or poor--the new birth (salvation) is impossible based on human merit (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6). Instead, it involves a miracle that only God can bring about.

10:28-31. *The eternal rewards in store for faithful disciples.* The disciples--at least most of them--were simple fishermen who would not have been considered "rich." So, Peter spoke up, "Look, we have left everything to follow you!" Peter wanted to know what recompense they could expect (cf. Matt 19:27). Jesus had earlier taught them on the cost of discipleship (recall Mk 8:34-38). They realized that it profited a man nothing to gain the entire world (in this life), only to forfeit his soul (be "impoverished") in the kingdom age to come. They were to follow Him with that mentality and that commitment. Responding to Peter, Jesus affirmed that they would be well-rewarded "in the age to come" (vv 29-30). Whatever sacrifices they made for Him and for the

gospel's sake in this life would be more than off-set by what they would gain in the future kingdom of God. His promise pertained to spiritual rewards, not earthly ones, and this would be in addition to "eternal life" which all true believers are to receive. However, the comment "along with persecutions" (v 30) reminded them that rewards were primarily for the future, and between now and then, the journey of discipleship would be paved with difficulty. Hence, rewards in God's kingdom would be based on commitment to Jesus and following Him faithfully. Jesus' final statement ("many who are first will be last, and the last first") was a somber reminder that for some, their "status" will be reversed in the kingdom age to come. For those who put riches and possessions above Jesus in this life--and thereby attained a certain social status and position of influence as a result--they will see the eternal riches go to those who had put Jesus first in this life.

Question 3

This rich young ruler was obviously a product of legalistic Judaism. According to his worldview, he felt he would merit eternal life by the good life he lived. When confronted about the commandments, he indicated that he had been faithful to keep them (vs 20). He apparently had difficulty seeing himself as an undeserving sinner before God who needed salvation as a gift. How does this observation help explain Jesus' instruction to him in Mk 10:21? Does one have to give up all his possessions to be saved?

In the Judaism of Jesus' day, people equated being rich with being in God's favor (and therefore being righteous). Many in that day would have reasoned that a rich person--especially one who tried to live by the Law--would receive eternal life and enter the kingdom of God. Jesus challenged this type of thinking, which is why the disciples were startled by His teaching (note vs 26).

Question 4

Is Jesus trying to say that all rich people will fail to enter the kingdom of God? Try to support your answer from the text. If not, what is He trying to say about rich people?

Question 5

The twelve that followed Jesus were quite a contrast to the rich young ruler. Whereas he was unwilling to give up his possessions when asked to do so, the twelve had virtually given up

everything to follow Jesus. But did they really lose by doing this? How would you answer this in light of Mk 10:28-31? What did they stand to gain? Is this promise also true for you today?

Topic 3 -- The Third Prediction of Jesus' Coming Suffering (10:32-34)

Parallel Passages: Mt 20:17-19; Lk 18:31-34

For the third and final time, Jesus predicts the suffering that was awaiting Him in Jerusalem. [Compare the previous announcements in Mk 8:31-33 and 9:30-32]. Luke 18:31 adds an additional detail: “everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.” The suffering and death of Messiah were predicted in the OT (cf. Ps 22; Isa 53; Dan 9:26). Luke 18:34 also adds that “the twelve understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what Jesus meant.” Though they understood the meaning of the words He used, they could not grasp how it was possible that Jesus--the one they believed to be the promised Messiah--could be placed in the hands of Gentiles and be slain.

Question 6

While many of the details of this passage are similar to the previous two, notice that vs 32 paints a vivid picture of the “feelings” going on at this time. How would you describe the attitude of Jesus, the twelve, and the others who followed them in light of this verse? What do you learn about Jesus from this?

Topic 4 -- The Request of James and John for Places of Honor (10:35-45)

Parallel Passages: Mt 20:20-28; Lk 22:24-27

As they neared Jerusalem, it was more important than ever that the twelve finally start to show some maturity, rally around Jesus, and behave the way they should as His disciples. Sadly, we see them doing just the opposite. They are thinking of their own self-interests and totally lacking unity. Despite Jesus' warnings that He was headed for suffering and death, the disciples cannot help but think that their Jerusalem destination will result in His reception as king. Consequently,

we see them jockeying for positions of prominence as they anticipate the coming glory. Their request to be granted places of honor in Jesus' "glory" (v 37) would have meant *His kingdom glory* in light of Mk 8:38.

Question 7

The "cup" and "baptism" that Jesus referred to was the suffering that He was about to go through leading to death (cf. Ps 75:8). Focusing on vv 35-40, why do you think Jesus responded the way He did to the request of James and John? What does this teach us about present commitment and future rewards in the kingdom?

Notice Mk 10:41-45. Observing the friction this created among the disciples prompted Jesus to take them back to the classroom to go over the lesson again about "true greatness." This was similar to Mk 9:33-37.

Question 8

On the previous occasion in Mk 9, Jesus used a little child as an illustration. Now Jesus switches to a different illustration. What does He use as an illustration now? How does that reinforce what He was trying to teach?

The paragraph ends with Jesus reminding them of what constitutes true "greatness." It is being a servant to others. Leaders who follow Christ must seek that which gives of oneself to the people they are called to serve. Christ offered Himself as the greatest example of this: "even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45).

Topic 5 -- The Faith of Blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)

Parallel Passages: Mt 20:29-34; Lk 18:35-43

It is not by accident that the final scene in the drama before reaching Jerusalem is the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus that took place near Jericho.

Question 9

Observing vv 46-48, what indications are there of Bartimaeus's faith?

Question 10

Bartimaeus was obviously a blind man. So why does Jesus ask the question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Do you see any connection between this episode and the disciples? [You might want to review Mk 8:17-21].

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In Mk 10:13-16, what point did Jesus wish to make by using the illustration of a child?

- A. People who enter the kingdom of God will become children once again.
- B. In the kingdom of God, children will be the rulers.
- C. A child has a simple child-like faith that is not complicated by pride and philosophical objections, and this serves to illustrate that one enters the kingdom by humbly believing.
- D. Only children that Jesus has blessed will be allowed to enter the kingdom of God.

QUESTION 2

The young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life was probably a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin who had been sent by the high priest to “test” Jesus. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

According to the notes for the rich young ruler, which of the following statements are true of the phrase “to inherit eternal life”? [Note: there may be more than one right answer].

- A. Inheriting eternal life in this passage is essentially equivalent to “entering the kingdom of God.”
- B. Inheriting eternal life in this passage primarily looks at the future aspect of resurrection to eternal life in Messiah’s kingdom.
- C. To inherit eternal life, one must first put their faith in Christ alone to save them.
- D. Rich people who are unwilling to give up their possessions will never be allowed to inherit eternal life.

QUESTION 4

Jesus instructed the young man to obey the Ten Commandments, because only by obedience to God’s laws could he hope to be saved and go to heaven. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

What is the reason why “salvation” is impossible for people, but possible with God? [Check all that apply].

- A. Salvation is impossible for people but not for God, because no one can perfectly live up to God’s standard of righteousness.
- B. Salvation is impossible for people but not for God, because it requires a work of the Holy Spirit to give them the “new birth.”
- C. Salvation is impossible for people but not for God, because people don’t have any way of atoning for the sins they have committed.
- D. Salvation is impossible for people but not for God, because people are sinners by birth (by nature) as well as having committed personal sins.

QUESTION 6

According to Jesus, those who had left their earthly treasures for His sake and for the gospel's sake, would receive a hundred-fold reward in this life, and in the age to come, _____.

QUESTION 7

In the third prediction of His coming sufferings, Mark tells us that Jesus “was walking on ahead of them.” What is the significance of this statement?

- A. Jesus was angry with the twelve disciples and chose to walk alone, because they argued over who among them was the greatest of all.
- B. The disciples were walking too slowly, because they were arguing with one another.
- C. The disciples were not in as good of physical shape as Jesus, and could not keep up with Him.
- D. This indicated Jesus' determination to reach His goal and His fearlessness of facing the suffering that awaited Him.

QUESTION 8

The request by James and John to be seated in places of honor next to Jesus may have been prompted by the recent mention of rewards in Mark 10:28-31. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

How did the other ten disciples feel when they heard James and John requesting the places of honor next to Jesus?

- A. They regretted that they had not thought of this themselves and been the first to have asked.
- B. They were happy for James and John, and hoped that Jesus would grant their request.
- C. They laughed at the request that James and John had made, knowing that everyone who entered the kingdom of God would be given a place of honor.
- D. They were indignant with James and John who wanted to be honored above the other disciples.

QUESTION 10

When blind Bartimaeus called out to Jesus for help, what title did he use for Jesus?

- A. He called Jesus “the Son of God.”
- B. He called Jesus “the Son of man.”
- C. He called Jesus the “Son of David.”
- D. He called Jesus “the Messiah, Son of the Living God.”

Lesson 9 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

According to John 3:3, a person must be “born again” or “born from above” to enter the kingdom of God. That is, he must have a new birth, as it were . . . but a spiritual one rather than a physical one. As Jesus went on to explain in John 3, this comes about when one “believes in Him” and receives eternal life (see John 3:16). Ephesians helps clarify this basic truth. When we are born again, we are “saved” spiritually from the penalty of sin. But we cannot be saved in this sense by trying to work our way to heaven (trying to do enough good works). The only basis for this salvation is “grace,” and the key to unlock this salvation is “faith.” Jesus used the illustration of the small child, because a child has all that it takes for entering the kingdom: humility and faith. He is not hung up by a lot of philosophical questions, he is not trapped in materialism and the pursuit of earthly riches, and he is not blinded by self-righteousness. A child has a simple child-like faith that takes God at His word, and humbly believes.

QUESTION 2:

The young man does appear to be a genuine seeker of truth. Notice the following positive points: (1) he ran to Jesus (vs 17) , showing his eagerness to talk with Him; (2) he knelt before Him (vs 17), which showed much humility (especially for a member of the Sanhedrin); (3) he addressed Jesus respectfully, calling Him “good teacher” (vs 17); (4) he asked an honest question that indicated he cared about his future destiny--”what shall I do to inherit eternal life” (vs 17); and (5) he actually was a good moral person, not someone flagrantly disobeying the Law (vs 20). Jesus apparently sensed his sincerity, because vs 21 says that “Jesus felt a love for him.”

QUESTION 3:

Jesus wisely took the young man’s opening comment (“good teacher”) to raise the question of anyone being good, and pointed out that only God is perfectly good. Jesus was not denying that He Himself was good or that He was God. He only wanted the man to consider this point that God alone was good, so that he would realize that all others are sinners in need of grace. The young man seems to think that he had lived a good life and *deserved* eternal life. Obviously, he is wrong, and Jesus’ tactic is to help him realize that he is not so good as he might think. In vs 21 Jesus instructs the young man to give up all his possessions. He said this, because He knew that the young man was rich and that he was “attached” to his possessions. Since the young man was deluded about his true standing before God, Jesus gave him this instruction to help him realize his lack of perfection. Hence, Jesus is not trying to say that all people must give up their possessions to be saved and have eternal life.

QUESTION 4:

Jesus is not trying to say that all rich people will fail to enter the kingdom. In vs 27 He concludes by saying that what might seem to be impossible is really not, for all things are possible with God. He can (and does) save rich people. We have many examples in Scripture of people who were rich and yet were truly saved (e.g., Abraham). Also, in 1 Tim 6:17-19 Paul gives specific instructions for believers who happen to be rich. “Wanting to be rich” can be a problem, but “being rich” may or may not be a problem.

In the story in Mark 10, Jesus is making the point that rich people do face a problem that may keep them from entering the kingdom of God. Their riches may deceive them into thinking that they are already good and don't need God's grace. [They fail to be humble before God]. Or they may trust in their riches to get them out of every problem, and therefore don't sense their need for God. Hence, in general, we see more poor people turning to God and receiving eternal life than rich people. In one sense, rich people have a disadvantage.

QUESTION 5:

Jesus makes an emphatic point by promising the disciples that they will not lose by leaving homes and giving up family and possessions while following Him. They may not have much in this present life, but ultimately they will be the winners--they will have far more! In fact, they will be rewarded both in the present age as well as in the future age of the kingdom. In the present age, they will gain family members, by which He undoubtedly means the spiritual family of those who belong to Jesus. In the future kingdom age, they will have "eternal life" and enjoy all the blessedness of Jesus' kingdom. Even if they are regarded as "last" in the present age (having little), this will be reversed in the future age--they will be "first" (having *spiritual possessions* worth far more than earthly ones). These promises are not just for the twelve, but also for those of us today who follow Jesus in this way (notice His comment in vs 29--there is "no one who"--meaning that it applies to all believers).

QUESTION 6:

The fact that Jesus was walking on ahead of them" indicates His determination to reach His goal and His fearlessness of facing the suffering that awaited Him. He was not scared, and He was unwavering in His determination to do the will of the Father and accomplish His mission (John 6:38). The twelve were "amazed," meaning they watched and marveled at how courageous He was (they never saw Him waver once in His faith and obedience). In contrast, those who followed "were fearful." They were probably aware of the opposition of the religious leaders at Jerusalem, and they knew that this would mean trouble. Now was the time to find out who was willing to have their faith put to the test. They might have to suffer--perhaps even die--for their commitment to follow Jesus.

QUESTION 7:

Apparently, James and John had lofty expectations for this climactic trip to Jerusalem. The words "in Your glory" in vs 37 recall what Jesus said in Mk 8:38 about the Son of Man coming in glory. Also, Jesus had recently talked about receiving rewards in Mk 10:28-31. So, it was quite natural for them to think that all this was going to happen soon. Therefore, they wanted to seek out the two highest places of honor for themselves. [They did not understand at all how and when the kingdom was going to come about]. Jesus did not deny that there would be such places of honor, but His response indicated that such places would be given to ones who were completely surrendered to God (even being martyred for their allegiance to Him). Yet it was not for them to know to whom God would give these places. What does this teach us? There are high places of honor that will be bestowed when Jesus returns in glory, even more than just these two seats of honor. Jesus' response about suffering indicates that one's willingness to surrender totally to Jesus--even in the face of persecution and suffering--will be a factor in how disciples are rewarded. Although our motive should not be to compete with other believers for the

highest positions, there is something positive we should learn here about rewards that ought to motivate us to follow Him with all our heart. This will affect the places we are given in the kingdom.

QUESTION 8:

Rather than a small child, Jesus now uses Himself as the illustration. He was indeed the perfect illustration of what greatness was all about, for He truly served others rather than sought others to serve Him. In fact, He did this in the greatest way possible: He served all of humanity by giving Himself as a “ransom” in their place. Interestingly the word translated “ransom” means to pay a price for the release of slaves from captivity. This was accomplished by His death on the cross for our sins. The price He paid was His own blood as He bore our sins on the cross. Cf. Philippians 2:5-8.

QUESTION 9:

Bartimaeus’s faith is seen in at least three ways: (1) he addressed Jesus as “Son of David,” which was a distinctive title for Messiah, the One promised to come from the line of David (2 Samuel 7); (2) he called out “have mercy on me” (a plea for healing) which indicates he believed that Jesus could do this miracle; and (3) vs 48 says that “he kept crying out all the more,” which reflects the persistency of his faith.

QUESTION 10:

Everyone present would have known what this man needed. His problem was that he could not see. Yet by asking, Jesus makes a point of bringing out into the open what ought to be obvious to all. I think this story has a bit of symbolic meaning for the disciples themselves. Notice that this event immediately follows the request of James and John. Once again, the disciples have shown how blind they are and lacking understanding (recall Mk 8:17-21). The disciples are blinder than blind Bartimaeus! Yet just as Jesus could help Bartimaeus regain his sight, so Jesus would be able to help the disciples gain their sight. Fortunately, Jesus never gave up on the twelve, just as He never gives up on us today. We all need help gaining our sight . . . spiritual sight . . . appropriate for those bound for Jesus’ kingdom.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. A child has a simple child-like faith that is not complicated by pride and philosophical objections, and this serves to illustrate that one enters the kingdom by humbly believing.

QUESTION 2 False

QUESTION 3

Answers “A,” “B” and “C” are all correct. “D” is not correct.

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5

All are correct.

QUESTION 6

Eternal life.

QUESTION 7

D. This indicated Jesus’ determination to reach His goal and His fearlessness of facing the suffering that awaited Him.

QUESTION 8 True

QUESTION 9

D. They were indignant with James and John who wanted to be honored above the other disciples.

QUESTION 10

C. He called Jesus the “Son of David.”

Unit 2 Exam: Following the Master

QUESTION 1

King Herod was afraid of John the Baptist and reluctant to put him to death, but he made a rash vow that obligated him to have John killed. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The Herod that had John the Baptist put to death was Herod Antipas. What territory did he rule over?

- A. Judea and Samaria.
- B. Galilee and Perea.
- C. Judea and Galilee.
- D. Galilee and Nabataea.

QUESTION 3

Following the feeding of the 5000, there were seven full baskets left over of broken pieces of bread, the number seven signifying that Jesus was the perfect king for the nation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Following the feeding of the 5000, Jesus had the disciples to cross the sea in a boat during a storm, but their reaction reveals that they had not learned the spiritual lesson of the miracle, and their hearts were hardened. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In Mark 6:48, we are told that Jesus was walking on the water and “wanted to pass by them.” According to the notes, what is intended by this statement?

- A. Jesus’ original intention was not to join them in the boat but to meet them on the shore.
- B. Jesus thought the apostles should learn a lesson in facing the wind storm without His help.
- C. Jesus wanted the apostles to see Him walking on the water, so they would do the same.
- D. This may be an allusion to Exodus 33 in which God *passed by* Moses to reveal His glory.

QUESTION 6

What was involved in the Jewish practice of claiming something as “qorbān”?

- A. This was a gift that one would give to show their appreciation for their parents.
- B. This referred to something that had been designated as a gift for God, but which became an excuse for keeping it for one’s own self.
- C. This referred to utensils that had been properly washed and were considered “clean.”
- D. This was the name given for the Oral Law that consisted of many man-made traditions.

QUESTION 7

When the Syrophenician woman first appealed to Jesus for help concerning her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus delayed and told her the children should be satisfied first and that it was not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. This meant:

- A. Jesus did not want to be involved in feeding the children of Tyre and Sidon.
- B. Jesus insulted the woman by calling her a "dog," since she was a Gentile.
- C. Jesus had a priority in His ministry of first offering the gospel of the kingdom to those of Israel, and that His miracles were primarily meant to testify to the Jews that He was the Messiah.
- D. Jesus wanted the woman to know that when He miraculously feeds the multitudes with bread, He did not want any of it wasted and left for scavenger dogs.

QUESTION 8

In Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees in Mark 7 over the tradition of hand washing, He made several points, including: (check all that are true)

- A. Jesus accused the Pharisees of neglecting God's commandments in favor of "the tradition of men" (Jewish man-made commandments).
- B. Jesus accused the Pharisees of using their practice of "Corban" to excuse themselves from helping their parents.
- C. Jesus warned the Pharisees that God would destroy the city of Jerusalem.
- D. Jesus taught the people that it was not the food that went into man that was defiling, but what came out of one's heart.

QUESTION 9

What are two ways that the Feeding of the 4000 (Mk 8:1-10) differed from the Feeding of the 5000?

- A. The first miracle took place in Galilee, and the second miracle took place in Bethlehem.
- B. In the first feeding the disciples came to Jesus asking him to dismiss the crowds, but in the second feeding Jesus gathered the disciples to ask their opinion for what should be done.
- C. After the first miracle, the disciples left by boat, but after the second miracle the disciples walked to the Mt. of Transfiguration.
- D. After one of the feeding miracles, there were 12 baskets of bread left over, but after the other there were 7 baskets.

QUESTION 10

When Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am," it was the disciple named _____ that said, "You are the Christ."

QUESTION 11

Jesus never told His disciples before He entered Jerusalem for the last time that He would be killed and rise again three days later. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

When Jesus said that a person who wished to come after Him had to "deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me," this primarily was intended to teach:

- A. How a non-Christian could become a Christian and go to heaven.
- B. That Jesus' disciples (who were already Christians) needed to make a total surrender of their will to Him.
- C. That all true Christians would be martyred for their faith, just as Jesus was.
- D. That a committed Christian should wear a cross around his neck as a symbol of loyalty.

Question 13

In Jesus' teaching about self-denial and taking up one's cross, what did Jesus mean when He said, "whoever wants to save his life will lose it"?

- A. The person who tries to earn his own salvation will not be able to do so, but will perish in hell.
- B. The person who wants to be saved of his sins and go to heaven must give up everything.
- C. The Christian who lacks total commitment and wants only to protect himself (being unwilling to suffer for the Lord's sake) may gain many earthly things in this life but will lose out in terms of eternal rewards for the future kingdom of God.
- D. The Christian who is unwilling to suffer for Christ and become a martyr (if necessary) will eventually lose his salvation.

QUESTION 14

When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain before the three disciples, what two Old Testament figures appeared with Jesus representing the Law and the prophets? _____ and _____.

QUESTION 15

On the Mount of Transfiguration, three of Jesus' disciples were allowed to see how Jesus will look when He comes again in His kingdom glory. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

When Jesus taught His disciples about true greatness in Mk 9, He taught them that the one who wanted to be first had to be "last of all and _____ of all."

QUESTION 17

When Jesus instructed the disciples to cut off their hand if it caused them to stumble, how would the disciples have understood His instructions?

- A. They understood Him to mean that they should literally cut off their hand.
- B. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as “symbolism,” and that what He truly meant was for them to wash their hands as a religious ritual.
- C. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as “hyperbole,” and that what He truly meant was for them to take decisive action to correct the problem or sin.
- D. They understood that Jesus was instructing them not to touch anything “unclean” with their hands, so that they would not be defiled.

QUESTION 18

At the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry in the first century A.D., all the Jewish rabbis held to the same view regarding divorce. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

When the Pharisees tested Jesus with a question about divorce, Jesus appealed to what verse in the Old Testament to indicate God’s view of marriage?

- A. Gen 24:4 where Abraham instructed his servant to take a wife for Isaac from his relatives
- B. Gen 2:24 which revealed that the man and woman were no longer two, but one flesh
- C. Malachi 2:16 where God said, "I hate divorce"
- D. Deut 24:1 which specified that a man had to write out a "certificate of divorce"

QUESTION 20

In Jesus’ teaching about divorce, the accounts in both Mark and Luke make no mention of any exception to the prohibition about divorce, but Matthew records an exception that Jesus made in the case of “immorality” (*porneia*). *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

When Jesus took a child in His arms and declared, “The kingdom of God belongs to such as these,” what point was He trying to make?

- A. People who enter the kingdom of God will become children once again.
- B. In the kingdom of God, children will be the rulers.
- C. One must enter the kingdom by a simple child-like faith that is not complicated by pride and philosophical objections, but by humbly believing.
- D. Only children that Jesus has blessed will be allowed to enter the kingdom of God.

QUESTION 22

The young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life was probably a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and very wealthy. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

The problem with the rich young ruler in Mk 10:17 is that he believed he had faithfully kept God's commandments and therefore deserved to have eternal life. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

How did the other ten disciples feel when they heard James and John requesting the places of honor next to Jesus?

- A. They were indignant with James and John who wanted to be honored above the other disciples.
- B. They rejoiced with James and John, and hoped that Jesus would grant their request.
- C. They laughed at the request that James and John had made, knowing that everyone who entered the kingdom of God would be given a place of honor.
- D. They regretted that they had not thought of this themselves and been the first to have asked.

QUESTION 25

The reason Jesus refused to heal blind Bartimaeus is because the man did not have enough faith to be healed. *True or False?*

Unit 3: The Final Week in Jerusalem

Mark 11:1--16:20

In Unit 2, following Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lord made three announcements that He was going to Jerusalem where rejection by the religious leaders, suffering, and death awaited Him. Although initially baffled by His words and still confused as to what was about to take place, the disciples followed Him. Along the way, they were given life-changing lessons about the demands of true discipleship and what greatness in the eyes of God meant. Leaders for the kingdom of God were not measured by earthly ways but by humility and servant-like ministry to others.

Unit 3 covers the final three of the eight major sections of Mark's gospel (11:1--16:20), all which center around events taking place in the city of Jerusalem. Lessons 10 and 11 focus on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the challenge by the religious leaders, and His message known as the Olivet Discourse with its prophetic teachings for the future. Lessons 12-14 focus on the final meal with the disciples and Jesus' arrest and trials that resulted in His crucifixion, death and resurrection. With the Roman centurion's declaration, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39), Mark's gospel comes full circle from its starting proposition, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). The book then closes on the note that Jesus ascended to the Father's right hand, and the disciples went out to preach the word everywhere while the Lord worked with them (Mk 16:19-20).

Unit Outline

Lesson 10: Jesus' Arrival at Jerusalem and the Challenge of the Religious Leaders
(Mk 11:1--12:34)

Lesson 11: Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders and the Olivet Discourse (Mk 12:35--13:37)

Lesson 12: The Betrayal of Jesus and the Final Passover Meal (Mk 14:1-52)

Lesson 13: Jesus' Trials and His Humiliation (Mk 14:53--15:20)

Lesson 14: Jesus' Crucifixion on the Cross and His Resurrection (Mk 15:21--16:20)

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand how Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, and how Jesus dumb-founded the religious leaders who challenged Him with His teaching of the Word.
- Explain the events leading up to the second coming of Christ, and take to heart the call for faithful disciples to "stay alert" as they await His return.
- Describe the betrayal and arrest of Jesus following the "last supper," and how the disciples failed to faithfully support Jesus during this crucial time.
- Explain the details of the interrogation and trial that Jesus was given before the Sanhedrin, and how they managed to convince Pilate to have Jesus crucified.
- Describe Jesus' experience of being crucified, and defend the validity of His resurrection.

Lesson Ten: Jesus' Arrival at Jerusalem and the Challenge of the Religious Leaders: Mk 11:1--12:34

Lesson Introduction

Lessons ten and eleven look at the events that transpired at Jerusalem prior to Jesus' arrest and sufferings. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Jesus is welcomed by the common people as Messiah, but then things quickly become tense when He attempts to minister and teach at the temple site. This leads to a lengthy confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, which occupies all of Mark 11:27--12:44. In this lesson, we will only deal with the first part of the confrontation section. The remainder will be continued in Lesson Eleven.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11)
- Topic 2: Jesus' Prophetic Signs of God's Judgment on Israel (11:12-26)
- Topic 3: Jesus' Controversy with the Jewish Religious Leaders in the Temple Courts (11:27--12:34)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain the significance of Jesus being mounted on a colt of a donkey at the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem for the last time.
- Apply three crucial lessons on prayer that Jesus taught His disciples.
- Understand the Parable of the Vineyard and explain how the privilege and responsibility for God's kingdom program would be taken from the Jewish leaders and given to the band of Jesus' disciples that would eventually become "the church."
- Defend the doctrine of resurrection using key Old Testament passages.

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11)

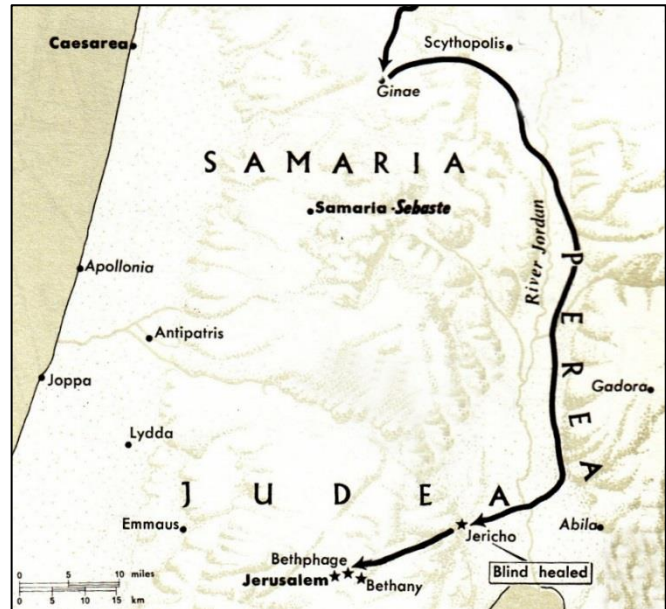
Parallel Passages: Mt 21:1-11; Lk 19:28-40; Jn 12:12-19

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem occurred at the time that numerous Jewish pilgrims were making their way to Jerusalem for the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The first seven verses focus on the colt that was provided for Jesus to ride on. This may seem like an insignificant

detail, but it was important. Matthew 21:4-5 adds a detail not found in Mark: by entering Jerusalem on a colt, Jesus fulfilled a prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9 (originally written about 500 B.C.). [Matthew also adds that there was both a donkey *and a colt*].

Question 1

Look up Zechariah 9:9. What does this verse say? What would this indicate about Jesus?



As Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt, many people cried out, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.” This also is a fulfillment of prophecy, for this is a quotation from Ps 118:26. This was the greeting that the people were to give the Messiah when He came. That some cried out “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David” (Mk 11:10) reflects their hope and anticipation that Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem would soon be followed by His being proclaimed king of the kingdom that had been promised to David (2 Sam 7:12-16). God, however, had a different plan for how and when the kingdom would come about. The cross must come first!

Question 2

Look up Psalm 118 and read all of verses 22-26. Verse 22 begins by depicting a *new temple* that the Lord was building, but the cornerstone was rejected by the temple builders. Can you describe what this would have to do with Jesus?

Topic 2 -- Jesus' Prophetic Signs of God's Judgment on Israel (11:12-26)

Even though Jesus was well aware of the fate that awaited Him, the story still needs to play out. He is there to present Himself to the nation as the promised Messiah. What is their response? To be officially accepted, He must be accepted by the religious leaders.

1. Jesus Curses the Unfruitful Fig Tree (11:12-14)

Parallel Passages: Mt 21:18-19

Upon first reading, one may wonder what this strange story has to do with anything. Jesus is giving a symbolic understanding to the fig tree. It represents the nation of Israel. He comes expecting to find it fruitful, but there is no spiritual fruit. Consequently, He curses the fig tree. Likewise, this present generation (and especially its religious leaders) are utterly unfruitful and are under Jesus' curse. They will be given over in judgment to the Roman army for destruction.

2. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (11:15-19)

Parallel Passages: Mt 12:12-17; Lk 19:45-48

On Monday Jesus returned to the temple area where He created quite an uproar. As Messiah, it was only appropriate that He have a passion for the place of God's worship. The activities mentioned here took place in "the Court of the Gentiles," not in the temple sanctuary itself.

The following excerpt from John Grassmick's commentary on "Mark" provides helpful background information for understanding the actions that Jesus took.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT (2:157-58)

11:15–16. When **Jesus** arrived in **Jerusalem**, He went into **the temple area** (*hieron*; cf. v. 11), the large outer court of the Gentiles surrounding the inner sacred courts of the temple itself. . . . No Gentile was allowed beyond this outer court. In it the high priest Caiaphas had authorized a market (probably a recent economic innovation) for the sale of ritually pure items necessary for temple sacrifice: wine, oil, salt, approved sacrificial animals and birds.

Money from three sources circulated in Palestine in New Testament times: imperial money (Roman), provincial money (Greek), and local *money* (Jewish). Money changers provided the required Tyrian (Jewish) coinage for the annual half-shekel temple tax (Ex. 30:12–16) required of all male Jews 20 years of age and up. This was in exchange for their Greek and Roman currency, which featured human portraits considered idolatrous. Though a small surcharge was permitted in these transactions, dealings were not free from extortion and fraud. In addition (according to Mark 11:16) people loaded with **merchandise** were taking shortcuts **through** this area, making it a thoroughfare from one part of the city to another.

Jesus was outraged by this blatant disregard for the temple area specifically set apart for

Gentile use. So He **overturned the** money changers' **tables** and **the** dove-sellers' **benches**, and **would not allow** people to use the area as a thoroughfare. Other certified markets were available elsewhere in the city.

11:17. Jesus' daring action captured peoples' attention and **He taught** (lit., "began teaching") **them** about God's purpose for the temple. Using a question expecting a positive answer, He appealed to Old Testament authority for His action (quoting Isa. 56:7b verbatim from the LXX).

Only Mark extended the quotation from Isaiah to include the words **for all nations**. God desired that both Gentiles and Jews use the temple as a place of worship (cf. John 12:20). This was especially relevant to Mark's readers in Rome.

By contrast **you** (emphatic), the insensitive Jews, **have made it**, the court of the Gentiles, **a den of robbers**. It was a refuge for fraudulent traders (cf. Jer. 7:11) instead of **a house of prayer** (cf. 1 Kings 8:28–30; Isa. 60:7) for both Jews and Gentiles.

By this action Jesus as the Messiah claimed greater authority over the temple than that of the high priest (cf. Hosea 9:15; Mal. 3:1-5).

Question 3

According to Mk 11:17 (quoting Isa 56:7), what was the primary purpose for the temple? Do the words "for all the nations" suggest anything about God's view of Gentile peoples?

3. The Withered Fig Tree and Sayings on Faith and Prayer (11:20-26)

Parallel Passages: Mt 21:20-22

Jesus uses the withered fig tree (which He previously cursed) as an opportunity to teach about prayer and faith. The fig tree (representing that generation of Israel) was cursed, because it lacked faith and had departed from God's ways. [See Micah 7:1-6 and Jer 8:13 for similar imagery and symbolic depicting of God's judgment upon the nation]. The disciples, however, would be spared from the impending judgment coming on the nation. However, the Lord expected faith and spiritual fruit from them.

Question 4

Reflect on vv 22-24. The reference to the "mountain" (the Mount of Olives) was probably a hyperbole (exaggerated statement) designed to make a point. What can we learn about the proper way to pray from these verses?

Question 5

Does this mean that God is obligated to answer each prayer we pray? Is it also important that our prayers be according to God's will? It may help you to look up the following verses: Mk 14:36; Matt 6:9-10; John 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:23-24; and I John 5:14-15.

Question 6

A corollary principle regarding prayer is given in Mk 11:25-26. What do you learn from these verses? Even though we have God's eternal forgiveness of our sins, is it possible that God may not forgive us *on a daily basis*?

Topic 3 -- Jesus' Controversy with the Jewish Religious Leaders in the Temple Courts (11:27--12:34)

Cleansing the temple area was an extremely bold step for Jesus to take. The chief priests and religious leaders of the Sanhedrin considered this an encroachment upon their authority, because Jesus had acted upon the central symbol of Jewish worship. Consequently, they confronted Jesus over the issue of what *authority* He thought He had. This section begins a series of climactic controversies between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders that will ultimately lead to His arrest, trial and crucifixion.

1. The Challenge to Jesus' Authority (11:27-33)

Parallel Passages: Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8

Did Jesus have the authority to cleanse the temple precincts? Obviously, the religious leaders did not think so. The real issue, however, was whether Jesus' mission was of divine or human origin. The same was true of John the Baptist. So, when asked about the source of His authority, Jesus responded to their question with a question about John. Was John's ministry of divine origin or was he merely acting on his own? But this placed the leaders in a dilemma, because either way they answered, they would lose. To save face, they acted as if they did not know the answer. Since they were so noncommittal, Jesus felt no obligation to have to answer them.

2. The Parable of the Vineyard and the Defiant Tenants (12:1-12)

Parallel Passages: Mt 21:33-46; Lk 20:9-19



Reading:

After reading Mark 12:1-12 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 12:1-12

All three synoptic gospels include this parable, the Parable of the Vineyard. Yet in Mark's account, it is the only major parable outside of chapter four. The story line is built around a scene very familiar to people living in first century A.D. Palestine, in which it was quite common for a land-owner to rent out his vineyard to vine-growers. They were responsible for caring for the vineyard and ensuring that a good crop of grapes would be produced. Then at harvesttime, the land-owner would send his agents to collect a portion of the crop as rent. The arrangement could be mutually beneficial. This parable, of course, was not about a literal vineyard but about the relationship of the nation Israel to the God with whom she was in covenant.

12:1. *The setting and OT background of the parable.* Verse one introduces the parable. The context in which Jesus told the parable is highly significant. There He was, having entered ancient Jerusalem for the final time, and being challenged by the chief priests, scribes and elders of the Sanhedrin. They had just confronted Him with the question, "By what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do these things?" (Mk 11:28). This was also the final week of the Savior's life on earth that would be climaxed by His official rejection and crucifixion. So contextually, this parable served to portray their rejection of Him as the nation's Messiah and the resulting judgment that would befall them.

In the parable, the man who owned the land and planted the vineyard obviously refers to God. The vineyard itself refers to Israel as God's covenant people who were placed on earth with the purpose of being a light to the world through which God would carry out His program of salvation-history. That He built a wall around it refers to the care and protection that God gave Israel. The vine-growers, then, would be the leadership of the nation that were responsible for the welfare and oversight of the nation, namely, to see that the nation was obedient to the terms of the covenant and faithful to cooperate with God in His ultimate program to bless the world through the sending of His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus.

This Parable of the Vineyard not only utilized familiar imagery of vineyard activity, but it was also a *play* on a similar parable found in Isaiah 5:1-7:

¹ I will sing to my love-- a song to my lover about his vineyard. My love had a vineyard on a fertile hill. ² He built a hedge around it, removed its stones, and planted a vine. He built a tower in the middle of it, and constructed a winepress. He waited for it to produce edible grapes, but it produced sour ones instead. ³ So now, residents of Jerusalem, people of Judah, you decide between me and my vineyard! ⁴ What more can I do for my vineyard beyond what

I have already done? When I waited for it to produce edible grapes, why did it produce sour ones instead? ⁵ Now I will inform you what I am about to do to my vineyard: I will remove its hedge and turn it into pasture, I will break its wall and allow animals to graze there. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland; no one will prune its vines or hoe its ground, and thorns and briars will grow there. I will order the clouds not to drop any rain on it. ⁷ Indeed Israel is the vineyard of the Lord who commands armies, the people of Judah are the cultivated place in which he took delight. He waited for justice, but look what he got--disobedience! He waited for fairness, but look what he got--cries for help!

In Isaiah's day, God declared "Israel is the vineyard of the Lord," and yet her unfaithfulness led to God's removal of His protective care at that time (permitting the judgment "curses" of Deut 28--29 to befall the nation). In particular, the LORD held the nation's leadership responsible for abusing His vineyard: "The Lord comes to pronounce judgment on the leaders of his people and their officials. He says, 'It is you who have ruined the vineyard!'" (Isa 3:14). So, Jesus' telling of the Parable of the Vineyard was particularly appropriate. In His day, the nation's leadership was responsible for God's vineyard (Israel), and once again their abuse was about to result in God's judgment falling upon the nation. This time, however, the judgment would be even more severe (as explained in vv 9-10).

12:2-5. *The mistreatment of the slaves God sent.* Since God was the one who brought the nation of Israel into existence and gave her a special mission (cf. Exod 19:5-6), He had the right to expect the nation to be faithful to her calling, just as an owner of a vineyard would expect a good harvest of grapes. In these four verses, repeated effort is made by the owner to send a slave to the vineyard to check on its condition and collect some of the produce (illustrating God's patience). Strangely, the vine-growers are hostile time and time again, sometimes wounding the visiting slaves and in some cases even killing them. The point is to depict the many times that God sent a godly prophet to the nation, only to be terribly mistreated. For example, Jeremiah was threatened by death (Jer 26:4-9), thrown into a muddy cistern to wallow in misery (Jer 38:4-6), and eventually taken to Egypt against his will. In Jesus' own day, John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded.

12:6-8. *The mistreatment of God's Son.* The sending of the owner's "beloved son" obviously depicts the sending of the Lord Jesus Christ (compare Mk 1:11 and 9:7 and the Father's utterance from heaven affirming Jesus as "My beloved Son"). If anyone should have been respected and royally received, it should have been Messiah Jesus. Verse 7 depicts, however, their contempt and rejection of God's Son, though they acknowledge Him to be the rightful "heir." According to the parable, being the son of the vineyard owner implied that he had full rights to the vineyard and that the workers of the vineyard were accountable to him. The corresponding reality is that Jesus is destined to be "heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). According to Dan 7:14, He will be given "dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the people, nations and men of every language might serve Him" (NASB). Yet the Jewish leaders of the first century A.D. rejected Jesus as the rightful Messiah and tried to prevent Him from being made king.

12:9. *The judgment on the vine-growers.* What the vine-growers did to the owner's "beloved son" was the ultimate show of disrespect, and for that they must face the owner's judgment. This involved two aspects. The first was that they had to be destroyed, which probably refers to the events of A.D. 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. The second

aspect was that the vineyard would be “given to others” (compare Matt 21:42-43). The privilege and responsibility of God’s kingdom program would no longer be entrusted to the Jewish religious and political leaders at Jerusalem. Rather that would now be entrusted to the messianic community that believed in Jesus and submitted to Him. This community of faith would be God’s “people” by virtue of the new covenant rather than the Mosaic covenant and would know no national boundaries. This privilege and responsibility was now being given to the “church,” initially the Jewish believers of Judea and Galilee but in the progress of time expanded to include those Gentiles who would also believe the gospel. They would have the responsibility of being a light to the world, and of preaching the gospel whereby the citizens of the kingdom of God would be formed. This switching of roles, however, does not mean that the church replaces Israel or that there is no further future for ethnic Israel in the plan of God (see Romans 11 and compare Ezek 36:22-28; 37:21-28).

12:10-11. *The fulfillment of the OT prediction of Christ’s rejection.* That Jesus would be rejected by the leaders of the first-century Jewish nation certainly did not take God by surprise. This had even been foretold in Psalm 118:22-23 (Mark’s quotation). In this passage, Jesus (the rejected *stone*) ironically became “the chief corner stone.” The imagery was that of the *new temple* that God was building in the Spirit (compare 1 Pet 2:4-10).

12:12. *Transition verse.* The Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus understood enough of the parable to realize He had spoken against them. Though they wanted to seize Him and put Him to death (so Mk 11:18), they refrained from doing so at that time because of their fear of the multitudes who were astonished at Jesus’ teaching and miracles. Hence the leaders left Him (but only for a brief time) and simply departed to plot how they might trap Him (compare Matt 22:15).

Anticipating His rejection by the nation and her religious leaders, Jesus tells a parable regarding a vineyard. The background for this parable is found in Isaiah 5:1-7, which describes God’s loving care for Israel in contrast to her disobedience to Him. Obviously the “beloved son” in the parable is Jesus. Notice in vs 10 that Jesus quotes the passage in Psalm 118:22-23 that we studied at the beginning of this lesson.

Question 7

Read vs 9 again. Who is the owner of the vineyard? What will He do to the vine-growers who were entrusted with the vineyard? How will He do this? [You may wish to consult the parallel passage in Matt 21:33-44]. What implications does this have for you?

3. The Question Concerning Paying Tribute to Caesar (12:13-17)

Parallel Passages: Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:20-26

The religious leaders now looked for a way to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people. The Roman occupation of Palestine was particularly upsetting to most Jews, so the leaders tried to find a way to trap Jesus in an issue that had both religious and political ramifications. [The Herodians, by the way, were men of influence in Palestine who favored the rule of the Herods and supported the ruling family]. John Grassmick provides the following helpful insights that shed light upon the significance of this testing of Jesus:

The tax “referred to the annual poll tax (head tax) demanded by the Roman emperor from all Jews since A.D. 6, when Judea became a Roman province (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 5.1.21). The money went directly into the emperor’s treasury. This tax was unpopular because it typified the Jews’ subjugation to Rome (cf. Acts 5:37).

The Pharisees objected to the tax, but expediently justified its payment. They were concerned about the *religious* implications of their question. The Herodians supported foreign rule through the Herods and favored the tax. They were concerned about the *political* implications of their question. Obviously, the question was designed to place Jesus in a religious and political dilemma. A yes answer would antagonize the people and discredit Him as God’s Spokesman. No messianic claimant could sanction willing submission to pagan rulers. A no answer would invite retaliation from Rome.⁶

Question 8

How does Jesus’ answer in Mk 12:17 help guide us today in trying to live a godly life that is faithful to Jesus while at the same time being faithful to whatever government we may be living under?

4. The Question Concerning the Resurrection (12:18-27)

Parallel Passages: Mt 22:23-33; Lk 20:27-40

When the Pharisees and Herodians failed to trap Jesus, the Sadducees thought they would have a try. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were Jewish religious sects, but they had differing beliefs. Although the Pharisees believed in the resurrection from the dead, the Sadducees did not

⁶ John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:161-62.

(Acts 23:8; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.4§16; *Wars* 2.8.14§§164-65). Therefore, the Sadducees tried to ask a question about resurrection that Jesus would have no answer for. Jesus not only showed how foolish their question was, but also brilliantly defended the doctrine of resurrection. Although Jesus could have appealed to OT passages like Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:2 that affirmed the doctrine of resurrection, He chose instead to draw upon Exodus 3:6.

Question 9

The Sadducees only accepted the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (in contrast to the Pharisees who accepted all the Old Testament). This explains why Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26. How does Jesus' use of this verse from Exodus prove the doctrine of resurrection? What did Jesus teach about resurrection in John 11:25-26?

5. The Question Concerning the Great Commandment (12:28-34)

Parallel Passages: Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28

The final question put to Jesus came from one of the scribes who asked a genuine question. What was the greatest commandment given to God's people? [Traditionally the scribes taught that there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament]. Jesus' answer was that love for God was the most important (Deut 6:4-5), but then love for one's neighbor was second to it (Lev 19:18). Since wholehearted love to God and one's neighbor was the sum and substance of the Law and the Prophets, to fulfill these commands was to fulfill all others.

The scribe's response was that to love God and one's fellow man was "more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." This echoed those OT passages that exalted a "broken and contrite spirit" and mercy over sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22; Ps 51:16-17; Isa 1:11-17; Hos 6:6; Jer 7:22-23; and Mic 6:6-8).

Question 10

What do you think Jesus meant when He said about this scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God"? What did he need to do to ensure that he would gain entrance to the kingdom of God? Do you know for sure that you will be in the kingdom of God?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus.
Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple?
Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

At the time of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He was placed upon a colt of a donkey, and Matthew noted that this fulfilled the promise in Zechariah 9:9 of how the messianic king would arrive. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The inhabitants of Jerusalem greeted all Jewish pilgrims who travelled to the city for the feast of Passover with the words, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

When Jesus cleansed an area of the temple complex known as the "court of the _____," He defended His actions by citing Isaiah 56:7, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

QUESTION 4

When Jesus taught about *faith and prayer* following the withering of the fig tree, which of the following were lessons He emphasized? (check all that are correct)

- A. When we pray and ask God for something, we need to truly believe it will happen and not be doubting in our hearts.
- B. When we pray and ask God for something, we must use the words "in Jesus' name" for the Father to grant our request.
- C. When we pray and ask God for something, we first need to make sure that we have nothing against others and have forgiven them.
- D. When we pray and ask God for something, we can be assured that we can have anything we ask for regardless of what it might be.

QUESTION 5

When the religious leaders challenged Jesus about the source of His authority, He responded by asking them the question of whether the ministry of _____ the _____ was of divine or human origin.

QUESTION 6

When Jesus told the Parable of the Vineyard, He was making a play on a similar parable in the Old Testament found in what passage?

- A. Genesis 49
- B. Isaiah 5
- C. Ezekiel 36
- D. Hosea 3

QUESTION 7

In the Parable of the Vineyard, Jesus announced (as part of the judgment on the unfaithful vine-growers) that the vineyard would be “given to others.” What did Jesus mean by this?

- A. Jesus meant that religious authority would be given to a new high priest of the Jews.
- B. Jesus meant that the Jews would be exiled, and their land would be given to the Romans.
- C. Jesus meant that the privilege and responsibility for God’s kingdom program would be given to the community of those who believed in Him as Messiah (that is, to the “church”).
- D. Jesus meant that the new authority for God on earth would be the Roman Catholic church.

QUESTION 8

The Herodians were influential men among the Jews that supported foreign rule through the Herods and favored paying the annual poll tax to Caesar. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

At the time Jesus was questioned about resurrection, the Jewish leaders had different opinions: the Sadducees accepted the doctrine of bodily resurrection but the Pharisees did not. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

How did the scribe respond to Jesus’ answer about the greatest commandment?

- A. He agreed with Jesus, saying “Right, Teacher.”
- B. He rebuked the other religious leaders who were trying to discredit Jesus.
- C. He confessed his faith in Jesus and immediately joined the disciples who followed Him.
- D. He acknowledged that to love God and one’s neighbor was “more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Lesson 10 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Zech 9:9 – “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” At the time Zechariah wrote this verse, the nation had no king of its own; they were under the authority of the Persian Empire. They still expected King Messiah to come, and this prophecy tells them how they would recognize His coming. He would not come on a great white horse, typical of the usual entry by triumphant kings. Rather He would come in a humbler way . . . on a colt of a donkey. So, He is king but does not arrive in the manner that most kings would. This was quite fitting for Jesus, because (although He did come as king) He first had to come humbly and suffer for the sins of the world. Only later (at His second coming) would He come in a more triumphant way on a great white horse (cf. Rev 19:11).

QUESTION 2:

Verse 22 of Ps 118 opens by depicting builders at work on a building (a temple building). At first, they reject a certain stone for use in the construction. Ironically, this rejected stone ends up being the “cornerstone” for the whole structure (the most important stone!). Verse 23 says, “This is the Lord’s doing.” In other words, God chose to override the decision of the builders: what they rejected, He chose for the chief cornerstone . . . the stone on which the whole building would depend. This rejected stone refers to Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 2:7), and the builders are the Jewish religious leaders in His day who rejected Him as Messiah. Yet Ps 118 goes on in vs 26 to indicate that this “rejected one” will come (to God’s people) in the name of the Lord. Thus, vs 26 became well known as the way that Messiah would be welcomed when He came. According to Mk 11:9-10, not only was Ps 118:26 used of Jesus, but He was seen as the rightful king (fulfilling the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7:12-14).

QUESTION 3:

The quotation from Isa 56:7 emphasizes the *prayer* aspect of the temple. Obviously, the temple was also used for sacrifices, but it is prayer that is emphasized here. God’s “house” (temple) was not to be for Israel alone, because God desired that peoples from all nations would become His worshipers. This implies that God cared about Gentile peoples and wished to save them and bring them under His blessing (in accordance with His promise in Genesis 12:3).

QUESTION 4:

Since the temple site (intended for prayer) was being abused, Jesus encouraged His disciples to be men of prayer, but also to be men who prayed in faith. To pray with doubt in our mind is contradictory. Therefore, if we think something is worth praying about, we ought to believe God for it to happen.

QUESTION 5:

God is not obligated to answer every prayer we pray. If we pray for something contradictory to His will, we have no right to expect Him to answer us. That would make God subject to us. Therefore, we must

learn what pleases God and what His heart is like, so that we may know how to pray more effectively. To learn this about God, we need to constantly be in His Word.

QUESTION 6:

Forgiveness of our fellow mankind (including fellow Christians) is extremely important to God. In fact, it is so important to Him that He may block some or all our prayers because of this. Those of us who are Christians will always have the eternal forgiveness of our sins, but we may need His *temporal forgiveness*, so that His blessings can continue to flow to us. Sin (including an unforgiving heart) blocks God's channel of blessing to us. Cf. Col 3:13.

QUESTION 7:

The owner of the vineyard is the Lord God (or God the Father). Verse 9 says that He will do two things because of what the vine-growers (the religious leaders of Israel) have done to His Son. First, He will come and destroy the vine-growers. This is probably a reference to the events in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (cf. Lk 21:20-24). Second, He will "give the vineyard to others." This probably has reference to the "church," a new people of God composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles. In the parallel passage in Matt 21:43, Jesus says, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it." The word translated "people" (Gk *ethnos*) is the same word used in 1 Peter 2:9 for "nation": "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (*ethnos hagion*)."¹ It is clear in that passage that Peter's focus was on the Gentiles that comprised the majority of the church. Up until this point in history, God's kingdom program had primarily been focused on Israel, but now (with Israel's rejection of Jesus) the kingdom of God is going to be entrusted to the church. There will still be a role for Israel to play in God's overall program (compare Romans 9--11), but in this age God will carry out His worldwide harvest of saving people for the kingdom by working through the church. The implications for Christians today: we have been entrusted with God's kingdom plan, and our responsibility is (1) as individuals to follow Jesus and be a light to the world, and (2) corporately to carry out the task of the Great Commission.

QUESTION 8:

Jesus recognized that the Roman government had a certain authority from God to rule and collect taxes. Yet this principle needed to be balanced with the truth that we must also "render to God the things that are God's." The latter certainly includes the matter of worship. Caesar had no right to receive the worship of his subjects (this was known as *Caesar worship* in that day). Likewise, no government has a right to demand that we worship any other God but the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet Rome (i.e., the existing government) did have a right to collect taxes. So, as Christians we must obey our civil government (whatever it might be), but we also should not compromise in the area of our worship or in doing anything that would be in violation of Scripture.

QUESTION 9:

When God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:6, all three of these patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) had been dead for a long time. Yet God said, "I am the God of . . ." He did not say that He *was* their God

(while they were living) but that even in Moses' day, He was still their God. For God's promises to the patriarchs to be fulfilled, they would have to be alive to receive what He had promised. This had to mean that they still existed (they were alive) and would one day be resurrected. In John 11:25-26 Jesus promised that He was "the resurrection and the (*eternal*) life." For anyone who "believes in Him" they will still live even though they physically die. In fact, in one sense they will never die (spiritually, that is). But only believers in Jesus Christ are entitled to this promise. Aren't you glad that you believe in Jesus and have eternal life?

QUESTION 10:

Unlike many of the other religious leaders, this scribe was a seeker of truth. He realized that Jesus had answered the others wisely and truthfully, and therefore felt he could learn from Him. We know that there were a few exceptional religious leaders who came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (e.g., Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; see John 19:39 and Luke 23:50-53). This scribe in Mark 12 was not yet a believer, but he apparently was getting close. He certainly had more spiritual understanding than the others, and he had an openness to Jesus that brought him near to embracing the gospel. Were he to embrace the gospel and believe, then he would be qualified to enter the kingdom of God. How can we know if we will be in the kingdom of God? If we are born again through faith in Jesus, we will be (cf. John 3).

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 10 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 True

QUESTION 2 False (this was a messianic greeting from Ps 118)

QUESTION 3

Gentiles (or nations)

QUESTION 4

Answers “A” and “C” are correct.

A. When we pray and ask God for something, we need to truly believe it will happen and not be doubting in our hearts.

C. When we pray and ask God for something, we first need to make sure that we have nothing against others and have forgiven them.

QUESTION 5

John the Baptist

QUESTION 6

Isaiah 5

QUESTION 7

C. Jesus meant that the privilege and responsibility for God’s kingdom program would be given to the community of those who believed in Him as Messiah (that is, to the “church”).

QUESTION 8 True

QUESTION 9 False

QUESTION 10

Answers “A” and “D” are correct.

A. He agreed with Jesus, saying “Right, Teacher.”

D. He acknowledged that to love God and one’s neighbor was “more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Lesson Eleven: Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders and the Olivet Discourse: Mk 12:35--13:37

Lesson Introduction

In the previous lesson, we began looking at the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders in the temple courts after He had arrived in Jerusalem for the final time. Having examined their challenging questions to Him in the previous lesson, we now turn to consider Jesus' counter-challenge to them in Mk 12:35-44. Then we shall consider the "Olivet Discourse," a message in Mark 13 that Jesus gave to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. In this message, Jesus prophesied that the Jewish temple would be destroyed, and then He went on to prophesy of the events that would lead up to His second coming in glory. Among the many lessons that the disciples could learn from His teaching in Mark 13 were that followers of Christ should be prepared for persecution and that they should "stay alert" (being spiritually prepared and living faithfully for Him) as they awaited His return in glory.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders (12:35-44)
- Topic 2: The Olivet Discourse, Part 1: Warnings for the Future (13:1-23)
- Topic 3: The Olivet Discourse, Part 2: Christ's Second Coming (13:24-27)
- Topic 4: The Olivet Discourse, Part 3: Parables and Lessons on Staying Alert (13:28-37)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand how Psalm 110:1 supports the doctrine of Christ's deity.
- Apply the lessons of financial giving to your own life based on the story of the poor widow who put in her two coins into the treasury.
- Explain the meaning of "the abomination of desolation," its connection to the future Antichrist, and how this signals the start of the Great Tribulation.
- Describe the signs that accompany the physical return of Christ to the earth.
- Practically think through what you can do to "stay alert" as you await the return of Christ.

Topic 1 -- Jesus' Challenge to the Religious Leaders (12:35-44)

In this short section, Mark calls our attention to three brief incidents that followed the questions put to Jesus by the religious leaders. One is a question for the leaders, then a warning to the general populace, and finally a praise for a poor widow lady.

1. Jesus' Question about David's Son (12:35-37)

Parallel Passages: Mt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44

The Jewish people in the first century (including the religious leaders) commonly believed that the Messiah was the “son of David” (cf. John 7:42). God had promised that one of David’s descendants would rule over an eternal kingdom (so 2 Sam 7:8-16), and this promise would be fulfilled in Messiah. This explains why many people who believed Jesus to be the Messiah called him “son of David” (e.g., Mk 10:46-48). The religious leaders, however, did not accept that Jesus was the “son of David.” So, Jesus now challenges these skeptical religious leaders with a question that they were not prepared to answer. Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, which had been written by David: “The LORD (God the Father) said to My Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand’ (i.e., the place of highest honor).” [Insight: In the original Hebrew text, there are two different words for “Lord.” The first (usually capitalized in English as LORD) is the word *Yahweh*, God’s personal name. The second, *Adonai*, means one’s sovereign lord or master]. This declaration pertains to David’s greater son (the Messiah), and yet David refers to him as “My Lord” (my sovereign master).

Question 1

The issue that Jesus raises (and which the religious leaders needed to answer) was how Messiah could be both David’s “son” and David’s “Lord” or sovereign master at the same time. How would you answer this, and what does Psalm 110:1 imply about Messiah?

2. Jesus Warns the People About the Scribes (12:38-40)

Parallel Passages: Mt 23:1-36; Lk 11:39-52; 20:45-47

Jesus’ question based on Psalm 110:1 had stumped the religious leaders. They had not carefully considered the implication of this verse, and therefore were not prepared to answer Him. This made them look rather foolish in the eyes of the people. This was an appropriate moment for Jesus to denounce them before the public. They loved to be honored before men and appear so

“spiritual,” but the truth was that they were spiritually bankrupt! Since they would lead people astray, Jesus warned people to beware of them.

Question 2

Just as in Jesus’ day, false religious leaders can be found in many cultures today. Based on Mk 12:38-40, what *principle* can we learn from these verses about identifying false religious leaders? What key virtue is lacking in their life?

3. Jesus’ Praise for the Poor Widow’s Offering (12:41-44)

Parallel Passage: Lk 21:1-4

This incident serves to illustrate the very thing that Jesus had pointed out about the religious leaders in vv 38-40. Many of these religious leaders (especially those from the Sadducees) were rich, and thought that their wealth reflected their spirituality. When they gave money at the temple site, they wanted other people to notice their giving large sums, so people would praise them. Jesus (God in the flesh) was more impressed by a poor widow who could only offer two small coins.

Question 3

What can we learn from this paragraph about how we, as disciples of Jesus, should view money and giving?

Topic 2 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 1: Warnings for the Future (13:1-23)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:1-28; Lk 21:5-24; 17:23-24

In chapter 13 of Mark, the Lord Jesus gave a remarkable prophecy regarding His second coming. This is usually referred to as the “Olivet Discourse,” because the setting for His teaching is on the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem (Mk 13:3). Parallel accounts are found in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. The accounts in both Matthew and Mark focus on the period of the Great

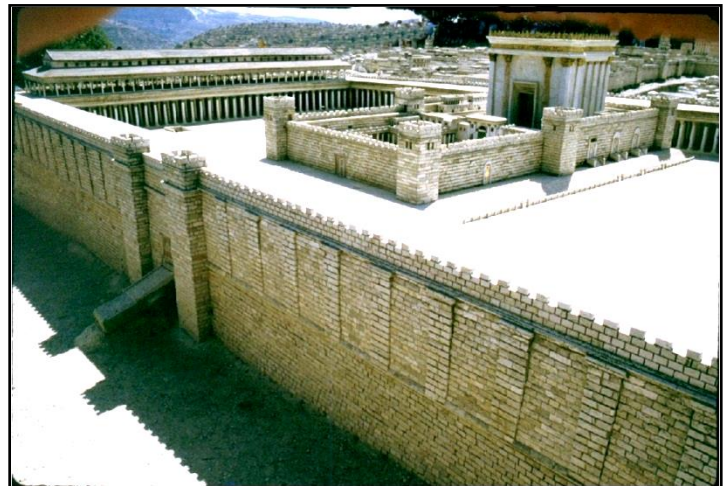
Tribulation just prior to the Lord's return, whereas Luke (alone) includes the time of distress in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans (see Lk 21:20-24). Only Luke includes the announcement that following Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk 21:24). The fact that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 would be linked in one discourse with the end-time events leading up to the second coming is not out of place. The events of A.D. 70 picture a period of intense disruption that is *like the end*. Many Bible students today think that the "times of the Gentiles" are almost fulfilled, and that the final Tribulation and second coming of Christ are not far away.

1. Announcement of the Temple's Destruction (13:1-4)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:1-3; Lk 21:5-7

In Jesus' day, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (which had been rebuilt and enlarged by Herod the Great) was one of the most magnificent and beautiful architectural structures of that time. Not surprisingly, the disciples were very impressed by its beauty.

Although they could not possibly imagine its destruction, the Lord Jesus responded by saying, "Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down" (Mk 13:2). He spoke these words in A.D. 33, and His prophecy was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 by the Romans. The reason God allowed the temple to be destroyed is because the Jewish nation had been unfaithful to her covenant with God and because the nation was guilty of rejecting and putting to death the Lord Jesus Christ.



Retreating to the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Him further questions about the fulfillment of this prophecy and matters related to it. According to Matthew's account, the disciples also asked about the sign of His coming and the end of the age. [Since the disciples did not yet understand the matter of His resurrection, they probably were not thinking in terms of a *second coming* in the far distant future. Possibly they were thinking that there would be judgment and a purging of the city for righteousness before His messianic reign began (His coming). From Jesus' perspective, however, there would be a long time between God's judgment upon Jerusalem and the temple in the first century A.D. and His return in glory following the Great Tribulation]. Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 did not mark the end of the

age, but in some sense, it foreshadowed events that would ultimately come on Jerusalem. Both periods would be characterized by tribulation, persecution of believers and destruction befalling Jerusalem. Jesus used their questions as an opportunity to tell them about the distant future when He would return again in glory (the second coming). Only later when they understood that “His coming” must first be preceded by His resurrection and ascension to the Father would they begin to understand that an undisclosed period of time separated their day from His return.

Question 4

If Jesus died on the cross in A.D. 33, how could He know that Jerusalem would be literally destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans? What does this say about Jesus? Do you think that Jesus knows what is going to happen with you in the future? How does that make you feel?

2. False Indications about Jesus’ Future Coming (13:5-8)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:4-8; Lk 21:8-11

Catastrophes have happened many times in history, either with wars, plagues, natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes), or famine. In times like these, people tend to feel panicky and sometimes feel that “the end of the world” is happening. Jesus warned His followers not to draw the wrong conclusion by these events (He knew that history would be full of such things). The destruction of A.D. 70 would not mark the end. They must also not be misled by anyone claiming to be the Messiah (an impostor).

3. Witnessing and Persecution Expected (13:9-13)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:9-14; Lk 21:12-19

During the intervening age (between His first and second coming), the true followers of Jesus could expect persecution . . . sometimes more and sometimes less. Despite any persecution that might come, Jesus’ disciples were to be faithful witnesses for Him. In fact, Jesus assured them that the gospel would be preached to “all the nations” (vs 10). This reflects God’s love for the entire world and His desire to bless all nations (recall Gen 12:3). [Matthew called this “the gospel of the kingdom,” which emphasizes the good news of Messiah’s kingdom to be formally established upon Jesus’ return].

Eventually history will culminate in a period known as the “Great Tribulation” (just before Christ’s return). Persecution for believers will be especially severe during this period. Jesus had the Great Tribulation in mind when He said, “the one who endures **to the end** will be saved” (note the references to *tribulation* in the verses that follow, especially vv 19 and 24). This verse

has been misunderstood by many, for it has nothing to do with the possible loss of one's salvation. The word "save" basically means to be "delivered" from some distressing circumstance. What Jesus meant is this: although many true disciples will be martyred in the Great Tribulation, some will endure to the end of that time and be "delivered" (saved) by the personal return of Christ (compare Mk 13:20). As support for this interpretation, notice the other references to "the end" in the Olivet Discourse. According to Matt 24:3, the disciples' initial question was "what will be the sign of your coming and of **the end** of the age?" In Mk 13:7, Jesus warned that the coming of wars must take place, but "that is not yet **the end**." This promise of deliverance (salvation) for the ones enduring to "the end" may refer to Jews in the land at the end of the Great Tribulation who call on the name of the Lord and are saved/delivered in fulfillment of Joel 2:32. [Note the reference to those in Judea in the next verse, Mk 13:14]. This passage in Joel 2:28-32 is in a context of "the day of the Lord" and concludes with a reference to those on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem who escape and survive the ordeal.

Question 5

Hostility and persecution for true disciples may come at the hands of governing authorities (vs 9), or it may come from one's own family members (vs 12). Have you had to experience any persecution because of your faith in the Lord Jesus? How do you feel about being "hated by all" because of your faith in Christ? Are you willing to endure such treatment?

4. The Horrors of the Great Tribulation (13:14-20)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:15-22 [Lk 21:20-24 looks at A.D. 70 events]

In vv 14-20, the Lord focuses in on that period known as the Great Tribulation. This will be the most distressing and horrible time in all human history, because an individual known as the Antichrist will come to rule over the world. He will seek to have the entire world worship him (and Satan who gives him his power). Compare Rev 13:1-10. He will have a special hatred for the Jewish nation and for believers in Jesus Christ.



Reading:

After reading Mark 13:14-20 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 13:14-20

The material in Mark 13 up to this point has been a more general description of the inter-advent age leading up to the final events just prior to the second coming. What is described in verse 14 and following occurs in that period known as the “Great Tribulation,” the three-and-a-half-year period preceding Christ’s return.⁷ Notice Matthew’s reference to “Great Tribulation” in the parallel passage in Matt 24:21. During this horrible period of history (also known as “the day of the Lord”), God will allow Satan to orchestrate a worldwide rebellion against the one true God (though of course it will ultimately fail). As part of his diabolical strategy, Satan will raise up an individual known as “the Antichrist” who will become a world ruler leading the mightiest military force in history. His goal is to have the world to worship him along with Satan (Rev 13:4). This individual is described in Rev 13:1-10 as “the beast,” and referred to in 2 Thess 2:1-12 as “the man of lawlessness.” This latter passage informs us that he “opposes *and exalts himself above every* so-called *god* or object of worship, and as a result *he takes his seat* in God’s temple, displaying himself as God” (2 Thess 2:4). Yet 2 Thess 2:8 goes on to clarify that he will be personally slain by the Lord Jesus Himself at His second coming (compare Rev 19:19-21).

13:14-18. *The Command to flee Judea.* Jesus’ comments in these verses are very much connected with the activities of the Antichrist that take place at Jerusalem, especially the establishment of “the abomination of desolation.” This expression comes from the book of Daniel, and was used there to describe a despicable act that desecrated the Jewish temple. In Dan 11:31, this expression was used for what the Syrian ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, did in 167 B.C. when he defiled the Jewish temple by having a small pagan altar erected on top of the altar of burnt offering (1 Macc 1:59; 4:44) and then offering a sacrifice on it to the pagan god, Zeus. Antiochus IV (whose rule is described in Dan 11:21-28) is given much attention in the book of Daniel, because he serves as a *type* of the future Antichrist. The Antichrist will also establish an “abomination of desolation” in the future (compare Dan 9:27 and 12:11), and this is what Jesus was prophesying of. According to Dan 9:27, this takes place at the same time that he betrays the “covenant” with the Jews, putting a halt to sacrifice and offering (thus implying a rebuilt temple in the future). The exact nature of this *abominable act* is not described, but it may have something to do with his declaration at the Jewish temple when the Antichrist declares himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4). That this takes place at the temple site is made clear in Matthew’s account (Matt 24:15), for he states that it stands “in the holy place” (compare the use of this expression in Acts 21:28 for the temple). When people see this take place, Jesus went on to declare that there should

⁷ Some people speak of a seven-year Tribulation, but the New Testament never refers to a seven-year period. The idea of seven years comes from Daniel 9:27, the final “week of years” (seven years) that completes Israel’s desolations. [The Hebrew word translated “week” in Dan 9:24-27 means a seven-year period. Daniel’s prophecy extended for 70 of these “weeks”]. The book of Revelation makes several references to a three-and-a-half-year period, which Bible scholars understand as the latter half of Daniel’s 70th and final “week” (see Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). According to Rev 13:5, this is also the period when the Antichrist will have absolute power over the world.

be no delay in getting out of Judea. Hence, this prophecy to flee Judea pertains primarily to Jews in the future Tribulation, though it will also serve as a key sign to others throughout the world. Not all Jews will heed Jesus' warning, but presumably those who believe in Him will do so. Travel will be particularly difficult for women who are pregnant at that time, and could be potentially troublesome if it happens during the winter season.

The account in Luke 21:20-24 differs from both Matthew and Mark. Instead of focusing on the "abomination of desolation" by the Antichrist in the Great Tribulation, Luke focuses on Jerusalem's destruction by the Roman armies in A.D. 70 (the temple's destruction was the original comment of the Lord, Mk 13:2). Yet there is a relationship between Luke's account and the others, for Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 is a "pattern" type of the end. Luke 21:24 indicates that during the A.D. 70 events, many Jews "will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away as captives among all nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

13:19. *The Reason for the warning: the Great Tribulation.* This "abomination of desolation" by the Antichrist will result in a terrible time of persecution and tribulation, unlike anything thus far seen in human history (compare Dan 12:1). It will be particularly difficult for those who remain in Jerusalem and Judea. According to Rev 7:14, many believers "from every nation" will be martyred during the Great Tribulation (so obviously the persecution extends far beyond the borders of Israel).

13:20. *Deliverance of the elect.* Despite the horridness of this period, God remains firmly in control and does not allow it to continue any longer than He deems appropriate. At the right moment, He will intervene for the sake of His "elect." From God's perspective, the Great Tribulation is made "short" (apparently meaning that it will be limited to three and a half years, or forty-two months according to Rev 13:5).

Question 6

According to the commentary above, what does the expression "abomination of desolation" refer to? How does the author see this being ultimately fulfilled?

5. Warning of Messianic Imposters (13:21-23)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:23-28; Lk 17:23-25

Once again, the Lord Jesus warns that there will be *imposters* . . . falsely claiming to be Christ or falsely reporting where He might be. In the Great Tribulation, false messiahs and false prophets are to be expected. Some of these will even have special powers (doing signs and wonders), but their power is of Satan rather than of God.

One of the problems that we will always face is the matter of *imposters*. There will be people who seem to have miraculous powers, but they are not really of God. That is why we must always evaluate them, not just on their ability to do amazing things, but primarily by what they say and teach. We are to evaluate them by the Word of God . . . checking to see if what they say is in accordance with God's Word.

Question 7

Have you observed any *false prophets* in your culture? Do you know of people who claim to be Christian teachers or prophets, but who have really been imposters teaching false doctrines?

Topic 3 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 2: Christ's Second Coming (13:24-27)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:29-31; Lk 21:25-28

These four verses are an explicit prediction of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will immediately follow the period of Great Tribulation. His coming will be accompanied by cosmic disturbances as He returns "in the clouds" with great power and glory (an allusion to Dan 7:13, and a fulfillment of what Jesus had promised in Mk 14:61-62 at His trial before the religious leaders). Matthew's comment that "all the tribes of the earth will mourn" is an allusion to Zech 12:10, the mourning of the Jewish people at the close of the Great Tribulation as they look (in faith) to "the one they have pierced," realizing how wrong they had been about Jesus being their Messiah. Yet this is His moment of vindication, as He takes up His rightful rule and dominion (Dan 7:14). Also, to occur at the time of the second coming will be a worldwide regathering of God's elect by the angels (Mk 13:27). Those who are *premillennial* in their theology (believing that Christ will rule on earth for 1000 years following His return in fulfillment of Rev 20:1-6) hold that this regathering will be part of the preparations for the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

Question 8

Jesus had warned His followers not to be deceived by "false Christs" who claimed to be the Messiah. How will people be able to discern Christ's return, and how will they be able to distinguish the real Jesus Christ from the false imposters who also claim to be the Messiah?

Topic 4 -- The Olivet Discourse, Part 3: Parables and Lessons on Staying Alert (13:28-37)

Following His teaching about the Great Tribulation and His second coming, Jesus went on to teach a couple of parables and give a lesson about staying alert. Believers must always be living as though Jesus could return any day.

1. Parable of the Fig Tree (13:28-31)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:32-35; Lk 21:29-33

Fig trees lose their leaves in winter and bloom later in the spring. When the fig tree blooms in the spring, people know that summer is not far away. Likewise, when people begin to see “these things happening” (i.e., the things He mentioned in this chapter, especially the “abomination of desolation” in the temple), they ought to be able to discern that His return is near. That generation that begins to see the fulfillment of these signs will also see “all these things” take place. That is, these things will happen in close proximity, including Christ’s return in glory.

Question 9

Think about Mk 13:31 for a moment: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” In the immediate context, this verse emphasizes the *certainty* of the things that Jesus has said regarding His second coming. Yet it also implies something in general about all that Jesus has taught. Describe in your own words what you think verse 31 is saying. What does this imply about Jesus regarding other “religious leaders” or prophets?

2. Parable of the Master-of-the-House’s Return from His Journey (13:32-37)

Parallel Passages: Mt 24:36, 42-44; Lk 21:34-36

The main point of this parable is to stress the fact that no one knows the exact time of Jesus’ coming in glory, many on earth will be caught unaware, and therefore those of us who are His disciples must always stay on the alert, being ready for His return at any moment. [That “being alert” pertains to Jesus’ coming in glory is evident from a comparison of Matthew’s account. See especially Matt 24:42].

To stress this fact, Jesus even states that only the Father knows the “day and hour.” Many people are perplexed by His statement, “But as for that day or hour no one knows it--neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son--except the Father” (Mk 13:32). How could Jesus know about the temple’s destruction, the Great Tribulation and His own return, but not know the time of His

return? If He is God (and He is!), how could He not know this? The answer is to be found in the mysterious nature of the Trinity itself, and it seems that in this case Jesus had submitted Himself to the Father in this matter and agreed that only the Father would know the time. [For further discussion, see the excursus at the end of Lesson Eleven].

Question 10

How many times in this paragraph do you see the words “on the alert”? How does this matter of repetition add to Jesus’ message? What do you think it means to “be on the alert”? What can we do, in practical terms, to make sure we are faithful to stay on the alert?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

EXCURSUS: Jesus' Not Knowing the "Day and Hour" of His Coming

In Mark 13:32 the Lord Jesus said, "But as for that day or hour no one knows it--neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son--except the Father." The verse is very perplexing, because the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus ("the Son") is God Himself. If He is God (and He is!), then how could He possibly not know something? Or to put it another way, how can the Father know something that the Son does not?

In early church history, this verse generated a lot of debate among the early church fathers, and it even led to a problem in the copying of manuscripts. In Matthew's parallel account, some early Greek manuscripts even lack the crucial words "nor the Son" in Matt 24:36.⁸ Nevertheless, these words are clearly in Mark's account, and are found in many of the Greek manuscripts for Matt 24:36 (which mean they were most likely in the original Greek text).

The words "day and hour" no doubt refer to the *parousía* itself, i.e., the second coming of Christ. This is apparent from Matthew's gospel, where the following verse (Matt 24:37) states, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah." The word "coming" (Gk *parousía*) is the same word used earlier in Matt 24:27, "so will the coming (*parousía*) of the Son of Man be." Although the general time for the *parousía* can be known (since that is the point of Mk 13:28-31), the more specific day and hour cannot. This is why the disciples of Jesus must remain "on the alert," in contrast to the fact that most of the world will be taken by surprise.

Yet our primary question here is why the Son Himself does not know the day and hour. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin by considering the Trinity itself. According to the Bible, there is *one God*, but this God is very complex. He exists as a Trinity, not three gods, but one God in three persons. This may seem difficult for the human mind to comprehend (and it cannot!), but why should this surprise us? If God is so marvelous that He could plan and create all that is in the heavens as well as is on the earth, in the seas, and even the microscopic world, why would we think that He would be a God that could be readily comprehended by us human beings? So, to say that God is a triune God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is to say nothing more than that God

⁸ The words "nor the Son" (Greek οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός) are found in the following manuscripts: \aleph^* \aleph^{2vid} B D θ and a few others (incl. vg^{mss} syr^{pal} and arm). The words are not found, however, in these manuscripts: \aleph^1 L W 33 157 180 Byz vg syr^{s, p, h} and Jerome. [The famous uncial manuscript A does not have this portion of Matthew]. The Majority texts (Byz) have influenced the King James version, which explains why the words "nor the Son" are not in the King James translation in Matt 24:36. Nevertheless, the evidence clearly favors the inclusion of these words, which is the more difficult reading and therefore preferred. It is easy to understand how some scribe would have deleted the words for theological reasons. The words "nor the Son" also have good support (esp. with \aleph^* and B). More significantly, the words are clearly included in Mark 13:32 where there is no textual dispute.

is something we simply cannot fully understand with our finite human minds. That should not surprise us!

Within the Trinity, there is diversity of function and how they relate to one another. Apparently, all the members were involved in the process of original creation (for the Son's part, consider John 1:1-5 and Col 1:15-17). Yet it was not the Father's role to go to the cross but the Son's alone. It also seems that the Father has a particular responsibility regarding establishing the timing of events in history: "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Acts 1:7). We also know that the Son has agreed to be submissive to the Father in His incarnation. In John 5:30 Jesus said, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Elsewhere in John 12:49 Jesus said, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak." See further John 5:19; 6:38; 8:26, 28; and 14:10. Jesus lived to do the will of the One who had sent Him (John 4:34). So, we must understand the *voluntary submission* of God the Son to God the Father, while at the same time recognizing that both remain fully and equally God. For Jesus to be any less *in deity* than the Father would mean that He could not possibly be entitled to the same honor as the Father. Yet Jesus clearly stated in John 5:23 that "all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father."

Hence, in the prearranged agreements of the Triune God, the Father had a role to play, and the Son had a role to play. Furthermore, the Son agreed to voluntarily submit Himself to the Father in His incarnation and not rely on His own power and initiative. It is for this reason that Jesus could say at one time, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), while at another time say, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). One ramification of this submission of the Son is that the Father would know the day and time of the Son's "coming" (*parousía*)--because the Father fixes the times and epochs by His authority--but the Son would not know the exact time. Whether this extends further (i.e., into His post-ascension state), the Bible does not say. It is possible that the Son might not know this in His incarnation, but would know it in His post-ascension state.

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Why did Jesus challenge the Jewish religious leaders to explain David’s statement in Psalm 110:1 (“The LORD said to My Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand”)?

- A. Jesus was hoping the religious leaders would give Him the place of highest honor.
- B. Jesus wanted the religious leaders to call Him “Lord.”
- C. Jesus wanted them to realize that the Messiah could not be “the son of David” without also being someone greater than David, that is, David’s Lord.
- D. Jesus wanted the religious leaders to realize He must die on the cross in order to ascend to the Father’s right hand.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following are valid lessons that we can learn from the story of the widow who put in two coins to the treasury (Mk 12:41-44)? [check all that are correct]

- A. There is no necessary connection between wealth and spirituality, as even those who are poor can still be spiritually mature.
- B. One’s motive for giving should not be for the purpose of being noticed by men.
- C. God does not measure our giving by the amount given, but by the faith we have in giving.
- D. The more we give money to God, the more He will approve of us.

QUESTION 3

How does Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse (Lk 21) differ from that of Matthew’s and Mark’s? [check all that are correct]

- A. Luke provides much more detail about the second coming of Christ.
- B. Luke does not include any of Christ’s warnings about persecution for His disciples.
- C. Luke includes a paragraph describing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
- D. Luke stipulates that following Jerusalem’s destruction, the city will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

QUESTION 4

When Jesus predicted that not one stone of the temple would be left upon another (all would be torn down), His prophecy would come true in A.D. 70. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Jesus’ comment that “the one who endures to the end will be saved” should be understood as a warning that Christians who renounce their faith will lose their salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

What did Jesus mean in Mk 13:14 in His warning about “the abomination of desolation”?

- A. Jesus meant that the religious leaders who rejected Him were committing an abomination.
- B. Jesus meant that the Romans would be committing an abomination by destroying Jerusalem.
- C. Jesus was making a prophetic warning that the Antichrist would carry out a despicable act at the Jewish temple site, probably to be connected with declaring himself to be God.
- D. Jesus was warning the people that they must not mistreat the temple site in the same way that Antiochus IV Epiphanes had done in 167 B.C.

QUESTION 7

Jesus promised to return to earth, but how will people be able to distinguish the true Jesus from imposters who claim to be the Messiah? [check all that are correct]

- A. Only Jesus will be able to show signs and wonders.
- B. Jesus’ coming will be preceded by incredible cosmic disturbances.
- C. Jesus will be seen “coming in clouds” in fulfillment of Dan 7:13.
- D. Jesus will go to the temple and declare Himself to be God.

QUESTION 8

When Jesus declared “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Mk 13:30), He meant that all the predictions of Mark 13 would happen during the lifetime of the disciples that heard Him speak. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

How can we reconcile the doctrine of Jesus’ deity with His own admission that He did not know the “day and hour” of His coming?

- A. These cannot be reconciled, and this is proof that Jesus was not really God in the flesh.
- B. Within the Trinity, it was the Father’s role to determine the times and epochs of history, and since Jesus in His incarnation voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father (He did nothing on His own but was completely dependent upon the Father), this fact had simply not been revealed to Him.
- C. Since Jesus was truly human and had to grow in knowledge and wisdom, He still had more things to learn including this deep dark secret known only to the Father.
- D. Since the return of Christ depended on the “times of the Gentiles” being fulfilled, the date was flexible and therefore even Jesus did not know the exact time.

QUESTION 10

Jesus' admonition to "stay alert" (repeated four times in Mk 13:33-37) is a reminder to us that:

- A. We need to observe signs in the heavens and frequently read the news about current events, so we will know when the return of Christ is near.
- B. We need to be on the lookout for "the abomination of desolation," so that we can flee to a place of refuge when it happens.
- C. We need to be on our guard for imposters who might come as false Christs or false prophets.
- D. We need to always be spiritually prepared for the return of our Lord by living a disciplined life and faithfully serving the Lord.

Lesson 11 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

In Psalm 110:1, David referred to his “greater son” (i.e., Messiah) as “My Lord” (i.e., my *sovereign master*). The only way that both could be true would be for David’s descendant to be both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s son). Psalm 110:1 was thus a veiled reference to Messiah’s true identity as both God and man. By His incarnation, He was both God and man at the same time. By referring to this verse, Jesus did not have to declare His own divinity: “I am God.” Rather, He directed the religious leaders to Ps 110:1 and let them draw the obvious implication for themselves. Messiah would truly be God in the flesh (which explains why He could forgive sins) know what was in the hearts of people, and control the forces of nature. If they believed Psalm 110:1, they should have been more open to accepting Him as Messiah and submitting to His authority.

QUESTION 2:

There are many false religious leaders today, and they can be found in every culture. One key *principle* that we can use for identifying them is their self-centeredness and desire for honor and praise in the eyes of men. [This is not the same thing as wanting to have a good reputation before men, which is a valid biblical desire]. What seems to be lacking in such leaders is the virtue of *humility*. This is why it is so important that those of us who wish to be Christ’s followers and leaders in His kingdom have lives characterized by *humility*. Our attitude should not be one of wanting to promote ourselves, but rather of wanting to serve others for Christ’s sake.

QUESTION 3:

There are several things that we can learn from these verses concerning the way Jesus’ disciples ought to view money and giving. First, there is no necessary connection between wealth and spirituality (as the religious leaders presumed). One could be poor according to the standards of the world, and yet be very spiritually mature. [We should also realize that it is possible for some to be spiritually mature and yet still be rich in this world--cf. 1 Tim 6:17-19--though we must all beware the dangers of “wanting” to become rich]. Second, one should not be guilty of giving money to the Lord to be noticed and praised by men (as the Pharisees and Sadducees did). Third, God does not measure our giving by the amount we give, but by the faith in which we give it. Obviously, the poor widow gave in faith, because she desperately needed the money that she gave to the Lord. She gave, even when it was not convenient for her!

QUESTION 4:

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 came about because of the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah (cf. Matt 23:29-39). No person living in A.D. 33 could have known that this was going to happen, unless it was divinely revealed to him. Yet Jesus is the “Alpha and Omega,” who knows the end from the beginning. He knew what was going to happen in the future, and He knew that ultimately (long after His death and resurrection) He would return to earth a second time. Jesus also knows what the future holds for each one of us individually. He is in perfect control, and that should give us great comfort when we walk in His will and seek to live for Him.

QUESTION 5: Your answer.

QUESTION 6:

The phrase ‘the abomination of desolation’ referred to a despicable act that resulted in the defilement of the temple site. In the place where the true God should have been worshiped, this was a blasphemous act. The ultimate fulfillment of this occurs in the Great Tribulation period, when the Antichrist enters the temple and proclaims that he is God (thus expecting all peoples to worship him). Cf. 2 Thess 2:1-4.

QUESTION 7: Your answer.

QUESTION 8:

The true Messiah . . . the Lord Jesus Christ . . . can easily be discerned and recognized, in contrast to any false ones (including the Antichrist himself). The Lord Jesus will make His appearance in a very dramatic way. He will not suddenly show up somewhere and claim to be the Messiah. Rather there will be great cosmic disturbances in the heavens, and then people will see Him coming in the clouds as He descends to the earth. There will be no mistake about His appearance.

QUESTION 9:

The words of Jesus (all that He teaches) are more enduring than creation itself. There will come a day when the present heavens and earth will be destroyed (cf. 2 Pet 3:10-13), but Jesus’ words will never pass away. This is a very emphatic way of describing the *certainty* of all that He teaches, whether regarding the second coming or anything else. There is no other religious leader or prophet in all of history that can make this claim that Jesus makes. Therefore, He is the most reliable person to whom we could ever turn to know *the truth*. This should motivate us to be more diligent in studying His Word.

QUESTION 10:

The words “on the alert” occur four times in this paragraph (see vv 33, 34, 35, and 37). This fourfold repetition is a very strong literary device to underscore how important it is to remain alert and vigilant regarding Jesus’ coming. To be on the alert is the opposite of being “asleep” (note vs 36), i.e., living in such a way that one is not prepared for the Lord’s return. It is helpful, at this point, to read and compare Matthew 24:42-51. There, we learn that one is not alert and ready because (1) he is not prepared for the “thief” who comes to break in the house; and (2) he lives an undisciplined life and acts unfaithfully (even oppressing the Master’s slaves). The parable of the “thief” in Matt 24:43 could be a possible allusion to the intrusion of the Antichrist to take control of the world system. Practically speaking, we can remain alert by living faithfully as a believer. This would include being a diligent student of the Word of God, having regular and meaningful times of fellowship with other believers (including worship), and spending ample time in prayer every day. We must also exhort and admonish one another to remain faithful to the Lord, being a living witness for Him every day.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. Jesus wanted them to realize that the Messiah could not be “the son of David” without also being someone greater than David, that is, David’s Lord.

QUESTION 2

Answers A, B, and C are all correct.

QUESTION 3

Both C and D are correct.

C. Luke includes a paragraph describing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

D. Luke stipulates that following Jerusalem’s destruction, the city will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

QUESTION 4 True

QUESTION 5 False

QUESTION 6

C. Jesus was making a prophetic warning that the Antichrist would carry out a despicable act at the Jewish temple site, probably to be connected with declaring himself to be God.

QUESTION 7

Both B and C are correct.

B. Jesus’ coming will be preceded by incredible cosmic disturbances.

C. Jesus will be seen “coming in clouds” in fulfillment of Dan 7:13

QUESTION 8 False

QUESTION 9

B. Within the Trinity, it was the Father’s role to determine the times and epochs of history, and since Jesus in His incarnation voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father (He did nothing on His own but was completely dependent upon the Father), this fact had simply not been revealed to Him.

QUESTION 10

D. We need to always be spiritually prepared for the return of our Lord by living a disciplined life and faithfully serving the Lord.

Lesson Twelve: The Betrayal of Jesus and the Final Passover Meal: Mk 14:1-52

Lesson Introduction

Chapters 14 and 15 of Mark's gospel comprise the account of Jesus' sufferings and death in Jerusalem (the Passion narrative). Lesson 12 of this course, which covers Mk 14:1-52, focuses on Jesus' betrayal by Judas, the Passover meal, and the desertion by His disciples following His arrest by the Roman soldiers. Although this lesson is divided up into eight topics, most of them are quite brief, and the total content covers less than one chapter of Mark's gospel. The unifying theme to these episodes concerns the disappointments and emotionally painful experiences of Jesus prior to His having to stand trial before the Jewish and Roman authorities. The latter will be the subject of Lesson 13.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Plot to Seize Jesus (14:1-2)
- Topic 2: The Anointing at Bethany (14:3-9)
- Topic 3: The Betrayal by Judas (14:10-11)
- Topic 4: Preparation of the Final Passover Meal (14:12-16)
- Topic 5: The Lord's Passover Meal (14:17-26)
- Topic 6: The Prediction of Peter's Denial (14:27-31)
- Topic 7: The Agony of Gethsemane (14:32-42)
- Topic 8: The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (14:43-52)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Point out the contrast of Jesus' anointing by Mary with the betrayal of Judas
- Understand the significance of the Passover meal on the night before the crucifixion
- List several instances in which the twelve let Jesus down in the crucial moments leading up to His arrest
- Apply lessons to your own life from these episodes that will help you be a stronger disciple

Topic 1 -- The Plot to Seize Jesus (14:1-2)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:1-5; Lk 22:1-2

The festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread was an eight-day affair that began on the 14th of the month Nisan, which corresponds to our March-April (cf. Exod 12:1-14 and 12:15-21). The

sacrifice of the Passover lamb, first conducted at the time of the exodus from Egypt about 1446 B.C., has its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the true Passover lamb! How fitting it was that His death for sins on the cross took place at the same time as Passover. As this important festival approached, the Jewish leaders were faced with a dilemma due to Jesus' presence in the city. They wanted to stop Him but feared how the crowds would react.

Question 1

According to Mk 14:1, the Jewish religious leaders (members of the Sanhedrin) wanted to kill Jesus, but they first had to seize Him. They intended to do this "by stealth," i.e., by some cunning covert strategy. Why did they want to wait until after the festival? What does this say about Jesus' popularity among the people?

Topic 2 -- The Anointing at Bethany (14:3-9)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:6-13; Jn 12:1-8

In this paragraph, we have the story of the anointing of Jesus by an unnamed woman at Bethany, a small village just to the east of Jerusalem (recall Mk 11:11). This appears to be the same story that occurs in John 12:1-8. If so, then the unnamed woman in Mark's account is really Mary, the sister of Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead (see John 11). [This is not Mary the mother of Jesus]. This would certainly explain her esteem for Jesus and why she would have made such an expensive gesture to show her loving devotion to Him. John, however, places the story six days before Passover, which suggests that Mark (who omits the story of Lazarus altogether) places the story of Mary here for *thematic* rather than chronological reasons. He was seeking to develop the contrast between Mary's adoration and commitment to Jesus with Judas' cold-hearted betrayal of Jesus. The perfume of expensive nard was worth over three hundred denarii, or approximately ten months wages for a common worker.

Question 2

Surely Mary knew the value of the perfume. Apparently, she poured it over His head (Mk 14:3) and anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair (John 12:3). Do you think Mary deserved to be criticized for using such expensive perfume in this way? Why or why not? What do you think was going on in her heart and what was her intention? Do you think this is a picture of how the heart of all Jesus' disciples should be?

Question 3

Although Mark's account notes that "some" of the disciples were indignant about what they saw as a "waste," John's account suggests that Judas himself was probably the primary critic of Mary. Read John 12:4-6. Did Judas really desire to help the poor? What do you learn about Judas?

Topic 3 -- The Betrayal by Judas (14:10-11)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:14-16; Lk 22:3-6

The original intention of the religious leaders was to wait until after the eight-day festival to seize Jesus, fearing that to do so while the pilgrims were in the city might spark a riot. The situation suddenly changed when Judas stepped forward offering to betray Jesus. Notice how the story of Mary in Mark 14:3-9 is "sandwiched" between the two smaller sections that highlight the intentions of the religious leaders to seize and kill Jesus. Mark uses this technique to heighten the contrast between "Mary the worshiper" and "Judas the betrayer."

It is rather obvious from these verses that Judas was hoping to make some money off his betrayal of Jesus. [John 12:6 refers to Judas as a thief]. We do not know what motivation Judas originally had for becoming one of Jesus' disciples (though he was not really a disciple at all). Perhaps he was politically motivated, thinking Jesus was going to overthrow the establishment and institute a new political kingdom. When this did not materialize, he may have become disillusioned and sought to gain something for himself. In any case, his love for money was one of the root problems in his life.

Question 4

Read 1 Timothy 6:3-10, and try to summarize the proper attitude that a disciple of Jesus ought to have about money and becoming rich.

Topic 4 -- Preparation of the Final Passover Meal (14:12-16)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:17-19; Lk 22:7-13

Although Jesus and all the twelve had celebrated the Passover meal on many previous occasions, this one would be different. The meal itself would be served on Thursday evening of that week, and (assuming the new day began at sunset according to Jewish reckoning) Jesus would die that same day, that is, on the following Friday afternoon. Jesus' death on the cross as the "lamb of God" would be the very fulfillment that the Passover lamb was intended to signify. Jesus chose to have this Passover meal strictly in the company of the twelve, and therefore it was necessary to keep the location a secret from others. The two disciples that are sent to make the preparations are Peter and John (note Lk 22:8). Apparently, Jesus had made prior arrangements with someone for the use of a room in his home, and the man carrying the pitcher of water (not a woman, as was customary) was meant to serve as a sign to lead Peter and John to the right house.

Topic 5 -- The Lord's Passover Meal (14:17-26)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:20-30; Lk 22:14-23; Jn 13:21-30

Mark only records a part of what took place at this special occasion. He omits, for instance, the significant moment when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples.



Reading:

After reading Mark 14:17-26 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage.

Commentary: Mark 14:17-26

The Jewish festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread are rooted in the Exodus event from Egypt. The Pharaoh of Egypt had refused to allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt, and as a result the Lord instructed Moses to announce the plagues that He was bringing on Egypt to pressure Pharaoh into complying with the Lord's will. The tenth and final plague was the death of the first-born of the land (Exod 11:1-8). In order that the Hebrews would not suffer the loss of their first-born, the Lord commanded them to observe the Passover meal (Exod 12:1-13). As part of the ritual, the Hebrews were to slay an unblemished male lamb and place the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the two doorposts of their homes (Exod 12:21-23). Those who did so received the Lord's protection on their first-born. Following the meal and the tenth plague on the first-born, the Hebrews left Egypt. They were then to eat unleavened bread for seven days (Exod 12:14-20). This became a perpetual statute to be observed throughout their generations (Lev 23:4-8; Num 28:16-25). The festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread were viewed together as one (since one

immediately followed the other), and were one of the three occasions when all male Israelites were to go up to Jerusalem (Exod 23:14-17; Deut 16:16; 2 Chron 8:13). So, the city of Jerusalem would be filled with pilgrims from all over the land at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, as multitudes had journeyed there to be a part of these festivals. The Passover meal itself was highly symbolic, with a focus on the slaying of the unblemished male lamb which represented the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 5:7). The shedding of His blood on the cross was the fulfillment of the blood of the Passover lamb. How fitting it was that the Lord Himself would share a final Passover meal with the twelve on the night before He was crucified.

The account of the Passover meal of Jesus and His disciples is one of the few that is recorded by all three synoptic gospels as well as by John. Mark's account of the Passover meal is quite abbreviated, and he leaves out the portion of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples that is given a lengthy treatment in John 13:4-17. Yet John leaves out Jesus' explanation of how the elements are representative of the new covenant, a matter covered in all three synoptic gospels. All four accounts make mention of Jesus' betrayal at the hands of Judas.

14:17-21. *The announcement of His betrayal.* Mark 14:17 informs us that the meal took place in the evening, which would have been Thursday evening (following sunset), in the middle of the month Nisan (March-April) of A.D. 33. As the twelve were reclining on cushions around the table eating the traditional Passover meal, Jesus suddenly announced that one of the disciples there at the table was going to betray Him. One by one they proclaimed their innocence: "Surely not I" (v 19), including even Judas (Matt 26:25). Jesus did not reveal who the guilty one was but simply indicated that it was one who dipped bread with Him in the bowl (a common Middle Eastern custom of having a dip to go along with the bread). This was a fulfillment of Ps 41:9 (so John 13:18).

Jesus went on to say, however, that though His death was a fulfillment of Scripture (Ps 22; Isa 53)--and therefore came as no surprise to Him--it would be a different matter for His betrayer. He had allowed himself to become Satan's agent (cf. Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27). A fate worse than death awaited Judas (the fires of hell awaited him!), and therefore it would have been better for him not to have been born.

14:22-25. *The explanation of the bread and wine.* The meal included more than bread and wine, but Jesus used these to explain their symbolical significance. It was customary in Jewish homes for the head of the household to explain the significance of the meal in light of the nation's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Jesus would draw out an even greater significance to the meal. The bread represented His body which would be broken (anticipating His crucifixion). The cup of wine represented His blood: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many" (v 24). Luke is more specific saying that it represented the "new covenant" (Lk 22:20). Just as the "old covenant" (the Law or Mosaic covenant) had been inaugurated at Mt. Sinai by blood--albeit animal blood (Exod 24:7-8)--so the new covenant had to be inaugurated by blood, but by better blood. This better blood was, of course, the shed blood of Christ Himself. At the cross, the old covenant ceased; the Mosaic Law came to an end (Rom 7:6; Gal 5:1). The new covenant predicted in Jer 31:31-34 began to be fulfilled, providing eternal forgiveness of sins (so Matt 26:28) and the enablement to obey God with the help of the Holy Spirit within (Ezek 36:26-28).

Jesus concluded His teaching by telling them He would not drink the fruit of the vine again

until the day He would drink it “new in the kingdom of God,” i.e., when the kingdom of God would formally be established (Lk 22:18). The fullness of the kingdom of God would not arrive until the second coming of Christ (Lk 19:11; Rev 11:15-18). In the meantime, the kingdom would exist in *mystery form* during the church age as the gospel went forth, resulting in citizens for the future kingdom (Col 1:13-14). During the church age, the Lord Jesus would use His kingly authority to build His church (Matt 28:18-20). Quite likely then, Jesus’ words of drinking it new in the kingdom was an anticipation of the messianic banquet in the last days (Isa 25:6).

14:26. *The departure from the upper room.* The last event of the Passover celebration for Jesus and the disciples was singing a hymn together. It was customary during the meal to sing from the Hallel (praise) Psalms, that is, Pss 113--118. Then they departed, passing over the Kidron Valley on the east side of the temple (Jn 18:1) to the Garden of Gethsemane on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Nevertheless, the disciples still not understand all that was about to take place, especially that He would be resurrected from the dead (Mk 16:11).

Question 5

Read John 13:1-17. Jesus played the role of a servant, washing the feet of the guests. What was He trying to teach the disciples by this?

The “covenant” that Jesus spoke about in Mark 14:24 is the new covenant. This was announced in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as a new and different covenant that God would make with Israel to *replace* the covenant that He had made with them earlier at Mt. Sinai (recall Exodus 19--24). Scripture speaks of this earlier covenant as the “old covenant.” This was the Law that God gave to Moses and the nation when they came out of Egypt. Both covenants were inaugurated by “blood” (recall Exod 24:3-8), but the blood for the new covenant would be the very blood of Jesus Himself. This new covenant was not efficacious for all the Jews, but only those who believed in Jesus. The spiritual benefits of the new covenant were also extended to all Gentiles who also believed in Jesus (2 Cor 3:4-6; Heb 9:15).

Question 6

Look up and read Jeremiah 31:31-34. Then read Matt 26:28. According to Jer 31:34, what was the primary spiritual benefit that the new covenant would provide? Do you have this today? Why?

Topic 6 -- The Prediction of Peter's Denial (14:27-31)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:31-35; Lk 22:31-34; Jn 13:36-38

Now came a solemn moment in the activities that evening after the meal. Jesus announced that all the disciples with Him at the Passover meal would “fall away.” The verb translated “fall away” (*skandalisthēsesthe*) means to take offense at someone or something and thereby turn away (possibly resulting in their falling into sin). Jesus was anticipating the effect that His ordeal of sufferings was going to have upon the twelve. Their loyalty to Him would temporarily collapse (in fulfillment of Zech 13:7). Even Peter himself--the most prominent disciples--would publicly deny his association with Jesus (recall his confession of Jesus as Messiah in Mk 8:29). Yet Jesus also anticipated their recovery following His resurrection, even expecting their reunion in Galilee.

Question 7

What do verses 27 and 28 imply about us as disciples? Are we capable of a temporary lapse of faith or even of being disloyal to Jesus? Have you gone through a time in your Christian life when you turned your back upon the Lord and sought to “run away”?

Topic 7 -- The Agony of Gethsemane (14:32-42)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46

In an olive orchard known as Gethsemane, at the base of the Mt. of Olives, our Lord went through great spiritual battle. Humanly, He did not want to go through the horror of the cross, yet He yielded His will to the Father's. No doubt He contemplated the consequences that the cross would mean for Him, especially the prospect of alienation from the Father. He would have to be “made sin” for us (2 Cor 5:21). The disciples were of little comfort to Him at this time.

Jesus certainly knows what it is to make the supreme choice . . . to be faced with the struggle of having to do something that inwardly He did not want to do. Yet He relinquished His own desires and surrendered to what the Father wanted. “Yet not what I will, but what You will.” Even here at Gethsemane, Jesus models something that is important for all of us who are His disciples.

Question 8

How can Jesus' choice to suppress His own will in preference for what the Father willed serve as a model for us today? What can we learn from this that will help us in our Christian life and with the ministry He entrusts to us?

Question 9

Having read Mk 14:32-42, do you get the impression that Jesus wanted the disciples to remain awake and be in prayer? Focus on verse 37 and Jesus' question for Peter. What lesson can you draw from this for your own life?

Topic 8 -- The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (14:43-52)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:47-56; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:2-12

While still in the early morning hours, a contingent from the religious leaders came to arrest Jesus accompanied by a Roman squadron (John 18:12). They were armed with swords and clubs, just in case a battle erupted. They probably came at this strange hour to avoid being seen by the populace and with as little commotion as possible. They were led by Judas who had prearranged that the one to whom he gave the customary greeting of a kiss (on the cheek) would be Jesus. The strange incident mentioned in Mk 14:51-52 is only recorded in Mark, suggesting that he was probably the "young man" to flee naked.

Question 10

Read carefully Mark 14:50. This was the fulfillment of what Jesus predicted in Mk 14:27. Suddenly the brave disciples (now only eleven) had all turned to being cowards. There is probably a connection between this and their behavior in Gethsemane when they failed to keep watch and pray. Now Jesus had to face the rest of His sufferings without their support. List at least three discouragements that Jesus would have had to face at the time of this arrest scene.

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

After Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders decided that the best time to kill Jesus would be during the festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Although Jesus' anointing by Mary probably occurred before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Mark placed the story in chapter 14 just before the note of Judas' betrayal to highlight the contrast between these two individuals. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The root problem in Judas' life was:

- A. A quest for political power
- B. A love for money
- C. A weakness for having an adulterous affair
- D. Resentment of the other apostles

QUESTION 4

According to the Jewish reckoning of time, a new day began at midnight.
True or False?

QUESTION 5

Which of the following statements is *not true* about the Passover meal and celebration?

- A. The original Passover meal is described in Exodus 12:1-13.
- B. Following the Passover meal, the Hebrews were to eat unleavened bread for seven days.
- C. Since the unblemished Passover lamb represented the Lord Jesus Christ, the shedding of the blood of the lamb anticipated the shedding of Christ's blood at the cross, the latter being the blood that inaugurated the new covenant.
- D. The primary Old Testament passage announcing the new covenant was Lev 23:4-8.

QUESTION 6

If the cup of wine shared at the Passover meal represented Jesus' blood of the new covenant, what are the two primary provisions of the new covenant?

- A. The forgiveness of sins and the promise of resurrection
- B. The forgiveness of sins and the right to attend the messianic banquet
- C. The forgiveness of sins and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit
- D. The enabling power of the Holy Spirit and the right to be a citizen of the kingdom of God

QUESTION 7

Following the Passover meal, Jesus announced that the disciples would "fall away." This should be understood to mean that He was instructing them to find hiding places to prevent being captured and arrested by the Jewish authorities. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took three disciples with Him and instructed them to keep watch for Him. Who were the three?

- A. Peter, Andrew and John
- B. Peter, James and John
- C. Matthew, James and John
- D. Peter, Andrew and James

QUESTION 9

The crowd that had been sent by the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus knew which one He was, because Jesus told them what color of robes He would be wearing. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Of the following discouragements that Jesus faced at the time of His arrest in the garden, which one is not correct?

- A. That the disciples keeping watch had failed to stay awake
- B. That Judas would betray Him with a kiss
- C. That the servant of the high priest cut off the ear of one of the disciples
- D. That those arresting Him acted as though He were a common criminal

Lesson 12 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

They feared a riot among the people, if they were to do this during the festival. Passover was one of the three required festivals during the year that every Jewish male was required to attend in Jerusalem. There would be people in attendance from outside Jerusalem, including many from the Galilee region where Jesus had a strong following. An attempt to seize or mistreat Jesus while the “crowds” were in Jerusalem had the potential of sparking a riot by those who sympathized with Jesus. Hence, the religious leaders felt it wise to wait until after the festival when the pilgrims had left Jerusalem to deal with Jesus. The fact that the religious leaders sensed the possibility of rioting suggests that Jesus was very popular with the masses, even among those who had not made the step of becoming one of His disciples.

QUESTION 2:

Obviously, Mary should not be criticized. The Lord Jesus clarified that. But why not? For Mary, this was an *act of worship*. She had personally witnessed the miracle of Jesus raising her brother Lazarus from the dead. She, along with others, had seen the glory of the Lord that day. They had come to understand that Jesus was indeed the resurrection and the life. This miracle had transformed her life and that of her family. Nothing was too expensive to give in worship of Jesus. Her heart was totally enflamed with love, adoration and praise for her Lord. She wanted to convey that to Him, and the gift of the perfume was her way of doing that. She did not consider it a waste at all and was glad to give so generously to the One whom she was now totally in awe of. On account of what she did, we all should learn the lesson that true worship is costly. It should cost us materially; indeed, it should cost us our entire being in total surrender to Jesus.

QUESTION 3:

According to John, Judas was not really concerned about poor people. He only spoke that way in his criticism. John tells us that Judas “was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it” (Jn 12:6). From this we learn what an evil person Judas really was. Outwardly he looked to be a true disciple, but inwardly he was not. This serves to remind us that there will be false disciples in the church, even as there was one among Jesus’ own band of the twelve.

QUESTION 4:

The goal of every true disciple regarding money should be “contentment,” not getting rich. We need to keep a perspective that money and possessions are only for use in this life. Since we cannot take them with us beyond death, we ought to use them for God’s glory . . . not just our own satisfaction. Wanting to get rich poses a danger, because it subjects one to many temptations. One may desire riches so intently that he may be tempted to gain them illicitly, or he may abandon proper priorities for the sake of gaining riches. The end, however, of such foolish pursuits may be grievous (broken-hearted), or worse yet it may lead to an abandonment of the faith. Nevertheless, we all must be involved in handling and using money, and we need to learn to do so with a godly attitude and maturity.

QUESTION 5:

According to John 13:15, the act of washing the feet of the disciples was meant to serve as “an example” for them. This showed incredible *humility* that the Lord Himself would stoop to do such a humble act of service for these twelve men. Hence, all of us who are disciples of Jesus need to do things that would be in this same spirit. This is what He means when He said, “you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” If He, our Master, could do this, then so should we. He also promised that we would be *blessed* if we did this (Jn 13:17). We are called to be servants to one another.

QUESTION 6:

The primary spiritual benefit that the new covenant provides is the forgiveness of sins, not just for a moment but eternally. The blood of the old covenant was merely the blood of animals, and therefore could not possibly bring eternal forgiveness. But the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (His death for our sins) was a sufficient payment for our sins, resulting in God’s forgiveness. When a person puts his faith in the person of Jesus Christ alone (trusting that Jesus’ death on the cross was a full payment for his sins), that person enters the new covenant and has eternal forgiveness before God. But a person must rely completely on Christ--not on any merit of his own--so that his salvation will be as a gift of God, “by grace through faith.”

QUESTION 7:

If the original disciples (especially after spending over three years with the Lord Jesus) could experience a lapse in their faith and turn away from Him, certainly we can, too. We are certainly capable of being *disloyal* to Jesus. Many of us have experienced times when we became discouraged, disillusioned, or simply turned aside into sin. Yet the Lord never abandons us. If we turn to sin, He will take us through discipline to purify us (Hebrews 12). He remains, however, always our faithful Shepherd.

QUESTION 8:

Your answer. Anyone who has been in Christian ministry for very long has had to grapple with the temptation to abandon the ministry in times of difficulty to seek a more comfortable place. While there are certainly times when it is appropriate to make a transition, far too often we see believers who simply do not want to face the challenges and difficulties of ministry. But rather than running away from what God has called us to do, we need to learn in those difficult moments to cast ourselves totally on Him. We also need to learn to say as Jesus did, “Yet not my will, but what You will.” By faith, we must choose to do God’s will . . . even if it will mean suffering or difficulty for us.

QUESTION 9: Your answer.

QUESTION 10:

Jesus would have faced several discouragements at this time: (1) that the disciples could not stay awake and pray at this crucial time; (2) that Judas would betray Him with a kiss; (3) that one of the disciples (Peter--see John 18:10) would try to retaliate and fight the soldiers with sword when this was really a spiritual battle; (4) that those arresting Him viewed Him as though He were a common criminal (in

reality, He was sinless!); and (5) that the disciples all left Him and fled as cowards. Despite all this, Jesus never wavered in faith.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 False

QUESTION 2 True

QUESTION 3

B. A love for money

QUESTION 4 False

QUESTION 5

D. The primary Old Testament passage announcing the new covenant was Lev 23:4-8.

QUESTION 6

C. The forgiveness of sins and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit

QUESTION 7 False

QUESTION 8

B. Peter, James and John

QUESTION 9 False

QUESTION 10

C. That the servant of the high priest cut off the ear of one of the disciples

Lesson Thirteen: Jesus' Trials and His Humiliation: Mk 14:53--15:20

Lesson Introduction

This lesson surveys several events that took place after Jesus' arrest but before His crucifixion. During this time, He had to appear before both the Jewish Sanhedrin (a religious trial) as well as before Pilate, the Roman governor (a civil trial). Mark, however, does not record all the hearings that were involved in these trials. For that, one must study all the gospels to get the full account. Notice the chart below:

Jesus' Trials Before His Crucifixion			
<i>Religious Trials</i>		<i>Civil Trials</i>	
Before Annas	Jn 18:12-14, 19-24	Before Pilate	Jn 18:28-38; Mk 15:1-5
Before Caiaphas	Matt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65	Before Herod	Lk 23:6-12
Before the Sanhedrin	Matt 27:1-2	Before Pilate again	Jn 18:39—19:6; Mk 15:6-15

During this period, Peter denied the Lord three times. Jesus' pre-cross sufferings culminated with a group of Roman soldiers mocking and humiliating Him.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65)
- Topic 2: Peter's Denial of Jesus (14:66-72)
- Topic 3: The Trial Before Pilate (15:1-15)
- Topic 4: The Mocking of Jesus (15:16-20)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain the events that transpired in Jesus' interrogation before the Sanhedrin that led up to the charge against Him of "blasphemy" (punishable by death according to Jewish Law).
- Understand the significance of Jesus' reply to the high priest when asked if He thought Himself to be the Messiah.

- Distinguish between Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and Peter’s denial of Jesus, and how the latter was restored, reaffirmed and recommissioned for service.
- Explain how Pilate--though knowing Jesus was not guilty of anything deserving death--was nevertheless pressured by the Jewish religious leaders into ordering His crucifixion.

Topic 1 -- Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:57-68; Lk 22:54a, 66-71

Following His arrest, Jesus was first taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest (see Jn 18:12-14, 19-24).⁹ Then Jesus was taken to the residence of Caiaphas himself, where He was interrogated by Caiaphas and members of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Here Jesus was falsely charged with “blasphemy,” for which in their eyes He deserved the death penalty. But they needed more than a religious charge to secure His death sentence from the Romans.



Reading:

After reading Mark 14:53-65 in your Bible, read the following commentary for this passage. This will give you further insight into the Jewish background regarding Jesus’ interrogation before the Sanhedrin.

Commentary: Mark 14:53-65

Prior to Jesus’ civil trials before Pilate and Herod Antipas, He first went through a religious interrogation before the high priest and “the whole Council” (Gk *sunedrion*), probably a reference to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious council). As an outcome of this hearing, they charged Jesus with “blasphemy” (punishable by death in Jewish custom), but also found other grounds for having Him condemned to death by the Romans. Although none of the twelve were in the room to witness the scene and so record it for others, it is very possible that either Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus could have been the source for this information (or even priests who were saved later after the resurrection as mentioned in Acts 6:7).

⁹ In A.D. 6, Quirinius, governor of Syria, appointed Annas as high priest (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.1). According to Jewish law, he should have held this position for life. However, he was deposed in A.D. 15 by Valerius Gratus, Roman procurator of Judea (Jos., *Ant.* 18.2.2). Nevertheless, Annas continued to hold a great deal of power among the religious leaders (see Lk 3:2; Acts 4:6). At the time of Jesus’ trial, Caiaphas (the son-in-law of Annas) was serving as high priest. He had been appointed as high priest around the year A.D. 18 by Valerius Gratus (eventually removed from office around the year A.D. 36; Jos., *Ant.* 18.4.3). Yet Annas was the patriarch of the high priestly family, and many still considered him the proper high priest, even though the Romans recognized Caiaphas as high priest.

14:53-54. *Jesus' hearing before the Sanhedrin.* The official high priest was Joseph Caiaphas (Matthew specifies him by name; Matt 26:57), and he presided over the gathering composed of the leading priests, the elders, and the scribes. In Roman times, the Sanhedrin was the highest governing body in Judea, the ultimate authority not only in religious matters, but in legal and governmental affairs as well, in so far as it did not encroach on the authority of the Roman procurator. The Sanhedrin could decide all matters relating to the cultic community and it could punish offences against the Law so long as these did not involve the death penalty. The latter was a matter reserved for their Roman overlords (Jn 18:31), which explains why Jesus ultimately had to be brought to Pilate.

This ruling body is thought to have evolved over the years, and by Jesus' time was composed of seventy dignitaries of the Jews and presided over by the high priest (Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 1.6). [The tradition of seventy goes back to Num 11:16]. Some were priests, but others were "elders" (lay members from influential families of Jerusalem) or "scribes" (experts in the Scriptures who also had the responsibility for transmission of the manuscripts). Most were of the party of the Sadducees (and hence of the Jewish aristocracy), though several of the scribes were of the Pharisees.

The fact that the Sanhedrin was convened during the night (see Matt 27:1) suggests that these religious leaders must have been anticipating His arrest and were prepared for such a meeting. According to John 18:15-16, Peter had followed Jesus "at a distance" along with another disciple who had personal connections to the high priest (which explains how they gained access into the courtyard of the high priest). Outside in the cool night air, Peter comforted himself by the warmth of a fire, while inside his Lord faced a fiery interrogation. In Mark's narrative of the events, he suspends the story of Peter momentarily but returns to it at verse 66, once he has completed the account of Jesus.

14:55-59. *False testimony against Jesus.* Verse 55 begins by clarifying the intent of the Council: they wanted to establish grounds by which Jesus could be put to death. They were not there to *justly* examine Him, for their minds were already made up that He should be killed (recall Mk 14:1). However, they needed more than a religious indictment against him (that would be of little legal interest to the Romans; e.g., Acts 25:18-20). What they needed was a *political allegation* that would move the Romans to act in their own self-interest.

Yet those who testified against Him could not really come up with anything that justified capital punishment, even by those who brought false testimony (vv 55-56). Eventually two came forward (so Matt 26:60) with a false testimony against Him regarding the temple. [Jewish law required at least two witnesses in agreement when a death penalty was involved. So Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15]. According to them, Jesus had threatened to destroy the temple and build another in three days. This was a reference to Jesus' prediction in John 2:19, when--after an earlier cleansing of the temple--Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again." Jesus was obviously speaking metaphorically, for John in verse 2:21 adds, "But Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body." Furthermore, Jesus did not say that He would destroy the temple. The verb "Destroy" is in the second person plural (= "you people destroy this temple"). The implication is this: "If you people were to destroy this temple, I would build a new temple *in the Spirit*." Ironically, because of their disobedience to God's covenant and rejection of Him as Messiah, the Romans would later destroy the temple in A.D. 70. And following His resurrection

and ascension, Jesus did begin building a new temple in the Spirit (see 1 Pet 2:4-8). Considering their misunderstanding of Jesus' temple remark, Mark concluded the account of the testimonies by saying, "Yet even on this point their testimony did not agree" (Mk 14:59).

14:60-62. *Jesus' confession to the high priest.* So far, the best charge they had come up with to use against Jesus was the falsely construed *temple accusation*. Possibly, if they could prove Jesus' intention was to damage the temple site, this might be construed by the Romans as a threat to law and order. However, if they hoped to convince the Romans that Jesus was guilty enough for a death sentence, they probably needed more than this. So, the high priest himself now took the floor to speak. Although he gave Jesus an opportunity to speak for Himself, Jesus remained "silent and did not answer." This itself was a fulfillment of Isa 53:7: "He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth."

Finally the high priest asked a blunt and straight-forward question: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" The title "the Blessed One" was a substitute phrase for the word "God" (on this, see *1 Enoch* 77.2; and Mishnah *Berakot* 7.3). In Matthew's account, he simply says "the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt 26:63). The question was clear: did Jesus regard Himself as the Messiah, the promised Son of God (that is, the son promised in the Davidic covenant; see 2 Sam 7:12-16 and compare Ps 2:7-9).

To this question Jesus would not remain silent. He acknowledged that He was, saying "I am" (Matthew 26:64 has "you have said so," a more indirect answer implying a *yes*). This was the first time in Mark's gospel that Jesus openly declared He was the Messiah. Jesus then went on to cite two quotations from the Old Testament that He merged together, Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1. Both were well-known messianic prophecies. According to Dan 7:13-14 (NET),

"And **with the clouds of the sky** one like a **son of man** was approaching.

He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.

To him was given ruling authority, honor, and sovereignty.

All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving him.

His authority is eternal and will not pass away. His kingdom will not be destroyed."

This was combined with Psalm 110:1 (ESV),

"The LORD says to my Lord: '**Sit at my right hand,**
until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

The latter (Ps 110:1) was a declaration by Yahweh God that He would elevate one who would be granted royal authority and serve as vice-regent with Him. In effect, Jesus was making the claim that a time was coming when He would be vindicated and have the right to go directly into God's presence in heaven where He would share God's authority. By His reference to Dan 7:13, Jesus was claiming He would be further vindicated by being given judicial power to rule all peoples with universal authority. Ironically, rather than being judged (as the present moment), He would be judge of all. By appeal to these two texts, Jesus was claiming an authority directly from heaven.

14:63-65. *The violent reaction to Jesus' confession.* The high priest (and all those gathered in the room) clearly understood the implication of Jesus' confession. At this, the high priest tore his robes, a sign of extreme displeasure over what had occurred (Num 14:6; 2 Sam 1:11; 1 Macc 2:14; *b. Sanhedrin* 60a). His thinking was that Jesus had dishonored God by claiming rights and powers belonging exclusively to God. The charge of "blasphemy" was quickly hurled against Him.

[Recall the earlier “blasphemy” incident in Mk 2:6-7 when Jesus had pronounced *forgiveness* to the paralytic]. According to the Law, the punishment for the sin of “blasphemy,” was death (Lev 24:15-16). The high priest called for a verdict from the members of the Sanhedrin: “what is your judgment?” (Mk 14:64), to which they replied, “He deserves death.”

With the death penalty determined (they could now rationalize their actions to the Jewish populace), they showed their contempt for Him by mistreating and mocking Him (fulfilling Isa 50:6). They also now had what they needed to take Him to Pilate. They could present Him as a challenger to their authority . . . one who was proclaiming Himself as king . . . and thus deserving death. After this night meeting, the Sanhedrin met again for a final ratification of the verdict just after dawn to satisfy strict Jewish legal procedure allowing trials only in the daytime (see Matt 27:1; Mk 15:1; and Lk 22:66-71).

Question 1

Peter initially fled along with the other disciples at the time of Jesus’ arrest (vs 50). Shortly thereafter, however, he decided to try and follow Jesus, but only “at a distance.” Turn back and read Mk 8:34-38 again. How would you evaluate Peter following Jesus’ arrest in light of this earlier passage? What can we learn from this?

Verses 55-59 describe the scene as members of the Sanhedrin came together attempting to produce charges against Jesus by which they would have lawful grounds for putting Him to death (recall 14:1). But they had a problem. They did not have any solid testimony against Him that warranted His death. Furthermore, some were bearing false witness against Jesus, but their testimonies were not consistent and therefore not admissible. They even tried to accuse Jesus of the crime of threatening to destroy the temple, which was simply their failure to understand His figurative statement of resurrection (see John 2:18-22).

Question 2

Reflect for a moment on Mk 14:55. Explain the significance of this verse and what it suggests about the person of Jesus.

Finally, in Mark 14:60-65, the high priest himself stepped forward to confront Jesus. Although Jesus had chosen to remain silent when falsely accused or when an insulting comment was made, He did respond when finally asked an honest question about being the Messiah. He said, “I am.” For much of His ministry, Jesus had tried to restrict His true identity. Now, when officially

examined by the nation's leaders, He openly confessed who He was. This put them in the position of either accepting Him as Messiah or rejecting Him, and then having to bear the responsibility for their verdict. Jesus even went further, combining two Old Testament verses about Messiah and applying them to Himself (Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13). The high priest then accused Jesus of "blasphemy," a charge punishable by death according to the Law (see Lev 24:15-16). Since they found no evidence of wrongdoing in Jesus, this was the only way they could call for the death penalty against Him.

Question 3

Think about Mk 14:64-65 for a moment. If Jesus is truly the Messiah and even the Lord God, do you think it was right for the Jewish leaders to treat Him this way? Why, then, did He allow them to do this? [It might help you to turn back to the Old Testament and meditate upon Isaiah 53:4-9 (written about 700 years before Christ). Also notice Isa 52:14 that says, "His appearance was marred more than any man"].

Topic 2 -- Peter's Denial of Jesus (14:66-72)

Parallel Passages: Mt 26:69-75; Lk 22:54b-62; Jn 18:25-27

Jesus had predicted earlier that Peter would deny Him (recall Mk 14:29-31), despite Peter's insistence that he would never do such a thing. Now the prediction came true. Not just once, but *three times* Peter disclaimed any association with Jesus. The third time was the most emphatic, because Peter "began to curse and swear." This does not mean that Peter used profanity. Grassmick explains, "Rather he placed himself under God's curse if he were lying to them and put himself under oath, as in a courtroom, to confirm the veracity of his denial" ("Mark," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:184).

Question 4

Read vv 66-70 carefully, taking notice of what is said about Peter's association with Jesus. Are you able to detect a *progression* taking place in each of the three accusations against Peter? Describe this progression. [It is not the same statement in each of the three accusations]. How does this serve to make Peter more uncomfortable?

Question 5

When the denial has completely played itself out to the point that Peter swore an oath to underscore his denial of Jesus, the rooster crowed and the reality of his action sank in. Verse 72 says, “And he began to weep.” Weeping (feeling sorrow for what he had done) is not necessarily the same as *repentance*, however. Look up Matthew 27:3-5 and John 21:15-19. Contrast the failure of Peter with that of Judas, and evaluate their responses.

In a later scene after the resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” (John 21:15-19). Peter’s three-fold denial was then countered by a three-fold affirmation of his love and loyalty to Jesus. This had the effect of reassuring Peter that he had been forgiven. The Lord in His grace then recommissioned Peter with the words, “Tend My sheep.”

Topic 3 -- The Trial Before Pilate (15:1-15)

Parallel Passages: Mt 27:1-26; Lk 23:1-25; Jn 18:28-40

Mark does not record Jesus’ appearance before Herod, though we know that Pilate had Jesus sent to Herod (Lk 23:6-12). Yet it was Pilate that was left with the responsibility of turning Jesus over for crucifixion, and this is Mark’s focus.

The scene began “early in the morning,” which would have been Friday morning, probably on April 3 of A.D. 33.¹⁰ The Sanhedrin could pronounce a death sentence, but it lacked the authority to exercise capital punishment (Jn 18:31). Thus, the Roman governor’s approval was needed to ratify this (John 19:10). This presented a problem, however, because the charge of “blasphemy” was not punishable by Roman law. Hence the Sanhedrin was forced to substitute a charge of treason against Rome, i.e., a political charge, based on the supposed evidence that Jesus had attempted to make Himself “king of the Jews.”

Bock elaborates on Luke’s account: “Luke introduces the initial examination by Pilate with a list of three charges: (1) Jesus is perverting the customs of the nation; (2) Jesus forbids Jews to pay the tax to Caesar; and (3) Jesus claims to be a king. Thus, Jesus presents a threefold threat to

¹⁰ Many different dates have been suggested for the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, but Passover of A.D. 33 has been ably defended in recent times by Harold Hoehner (*Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 1977) and by Jack Finegan (*Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed., 1998).

Roman authority and law and order, to which Pilate must respond.”¹¹ The third charge (true, but not in the way the religious leaders framed it to Pilate) would have been the one of most concern to Pilate and which forced him to examine Jesus.

Question 6

When Pilate asked Jesus if He was “the king of the Jews,” Jesus’ reply was literally, “You say.” This was not a clear “yes,” but rather a “yes” with a qualification attached. Do you think Pilate and Jesus construed the meaning of “king” and “kingdom” in the same ways? Elaborate.

Question 7

During the Passover season, the Roman governor had a practice of releasing one criminal, and Barabbas (a known insurrectionist) was put forth for consideration. Do you find any *irony* in the choice to release Barabbas rather than Jesus?

Mark points out that it was the chief priests who stirred up the crowds to ask for Barabbas, thereby holding them primarily responsible (Mk 15:10). Not only did the crowds call for Barabbas’s release rather than Jesus, but they went further by insisting on Jesus’ crucifixion. “Crucify Him!” they shouted. Pilate’s reference to Jesus as “Him whom you call the King of the Jews” (vs 12) indicates that he saw no real merit to this charge against Jesus nor did he view Jesus as a threat to Rome. Matthew adds a detail not found in Mark that reflects Pilate’s attempt to shirk responsibility for the decision: “I am innocent of this man’s blood; you take care of it yourselves!” (Matt 27:24). Such a comment hardly dismissed him of responsibility (see Acts 4:27-28). Yet Matthew in the next verse adds the crowd’s reaction whereby they take responsibility for their demand to have Jesus crucified: “Let his blood be on us and on our children!” (note Acts 3:13-14). The trial scene ended with Pilate having Jesus scourged, a very cruel and painful ordeal. The whip was formed by leather strands fixed with metal or bone tips on the end which tore the victim’s flesh to shreds. This involved an enormous loss of blood that--together with crucifixion--hastened the person’s death.

¹¹ Darrell Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Baker, 2017), 484.

Question 8

Pilate lacked the “backbone” to do what he knew was right. According to verse 15, what was Pilate’s motive, and what does this say about him as a political figure?

Topic 4 -- The Mocking of Jesus (15:16-20)

Parallel Passages: Mt 27:27-31; Jn 19:2-3

Once again, we get a vivid picture of the pre-cross sufferings of Jesus, this time at the hands of the Gentile Roman soldiers.

Question 9

After reading this paragraph, read Acts 2:33-36 from Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost. Jesus could endure the humiliation that He did, because He knew what His sufferings would lead to, namely, His exaltation. How does this consolation help you in the trials that you must undergo? Try to personalize your answer.

Question 10

According to Mk 15:19, the soldiers were “kneeling and bowing before Him.” Look up and read Philippians 2:5-11. What these unbelieving soldiers did in mockery, everyone will one day do in true respect for Jesus. What application do you see in this passage from Philippians for yourself?

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 13 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In Jesus' day, the Jewish Sanhedrin was a council of some seventy Jewish religious leaders, presided over by the high priest Caiaphas, who were responsible for decisions concerning religious matters but who did not have authority to enact the death penalty. *True or false?*

QUESTION 2

When Jesus was interrogated before the Sanhedrin, a couple of Jews gave testimony that Jesus had threatened to destroy the Jewish temple. What was the true intent of Jesus' statement about destroying and rebuilding the temple?

- A. Jesus was predicting that the temple would be destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans but would subsequently be rebuilt.
- B. Jesus was challenging the Jews to destroy Herod's temple, and He would lead them in rebuilding another one.
- C. Jesus was speaking metaphorically (referring to His own body as a temple). If the Jews were to destroy Him, yet He would build a new temple in the Spirit (referring to the church).
- D. Jesus was referring to the Babylonians who destroyed the temple in 586 B.C., though it was rebuilt within three generations of that time.

QUESTION 3

When Jesus was asked by the high priest if He were the Messiah, how did He respond? [Check all that are true].

- A. Jesus demonstrated that He was the Messiah by performing a miracle before the Sanhedrin.
- B. Jesus affirmed that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One.
- C. Jesus identified Himself with the "son of man" of Dan 7:13-14 who would be given a kingdom over which to rule.
- D. Jesus identified Himself as David's "lord" mentioned in Psalm 110:1 who would be elevated to a position of honor at God's "right hand."

QUESTION 4

Because of Jesus' response to the high priest that He was the Messiah, what charge was made against Jesus by the Sanhedrin which made Him guilty of a sin deserving death?

QUESTION 5

When Peter denied Jesus for the third time, he “began to curse and swear.” This means that . . .

- A. He used profanity to persuade his accusers that he was not a Christian.
- B. He was placing himself under oath, calling for a curse from God if found lying.
- C. He was calling for God’s curse upon the servant girl that kept harassing him.
- D. He was volunteering to swear an oath of allegiance to the high priest.

QUESTION 6

When the Lord asked Peter three times in John 21:15-19 if he loved Him and concluded by instructing Peter to “Tend My sheep,” this was a reaffirmation to Peter that the Lord had forgiven him for denying Him three times on the night before the crucifixion. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

In Mark’s gospel account, he first gives a brief description of Jesus’ appearance before Herod, and follows this with a detailed account of the questioning of Jesus by Pilate. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Because the charge of “blasphemy” was not punishable by Roman law, the Jewish religious leaders hoped that they could convince Pilate that Jesus was guilty of treason against Rome. What was their basis for such a political charge?

- A. They accused Jesus of starting riots and causing large demonstrations.
- B. They accused Jesus of disturbing the peace by what He preached in the synagogues.
- C. They accused Jesus of leading a political rebellion, since one of the men He chose to be among the twelve disciples had been a Jewish “Zealot” (Jews who rebelled against Rome).
- D. They accused Jesus of rebelling against Rome by declaring Himself the “king of the Jews.”

QUESTION 9

Pilate was vehemently angry that Jesus had dared to think He was “king of the Jews,” and he was more intent on seeing Jesus crucified than were the Jewish religious leaders of the Sanhedrin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

According to Mark 15:16-20, one of the ways that the Roman soldiers mocked the Lord Jesus was by dressing Him up in a _____ robe and putting a crown of thorns on His head.

Lesson 13 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

One of the primary lessons that Jesus had taught the twelve was that to come after Him, one must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus. Peter had failed to do that. Along with the others, Peter had sought “to save his life.” Jesus went on to warn those who might be ashamed of Him and His words. We should not be too hard on Peter, however, for we are really no better than he. What Jesus had taught was not easy to live out, and Peter was finding just how hard it could be. Now his faith was being put to the test, and we see Peter with feet of clay. Here he is failing (even before he has denied Jesus!), and yet he will learn from this and go on to become a great stalwart of the faith. All great men of faith will stumble at times and fail their Lord. The victorious Christian is the one who does not give up because of his failings, but seeks the Lord’s grace and gets back in the race. Peter will go on to do just that.

QUESTION 2:

Obviously, the members of the Sanhedrin hated Jesus and were very intent on finding grounds to put Him to death. If there were any way to come up with valid accusations against Him, we know that they would have done so. But the Word says, “they were not finding any.” Despite how hard they tried to find evidence of wrongdoing, they could find nothing. Jesus was not only innocent; He was perfectly righteous and without sin. Isaiah 53:9 foretold that “He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.” If anyone today might be tempted to think that Jesus was a mere man who had sin like anyone else, they should seriously consider the implications of Mark 14:55. If there had been any sin that could have been found in Jesus, these religious leaders of His day would have known it and used it against Him. But He had none, and there was nothing to accuse Him of. This is an important fact, because Jesus had to be without sin in order to become a perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Otherwise, He was not qualified to be our sin-substitute.

QUESTION 3:

The religious leaders thought Jesus was “deserving of death,” because He admitted to being the Messiah. Their actions of spitting on Him, beating and slapping Him reflected their utter contempt for Him. Rather than treating Him with “honor,” they dishonored Him in the most humiliating way they could. Isa 53:3 states, “He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Jesus allowed them to do this, because He knew what His purpose was . . . to go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. He did not allow their insults and cruelty to interfere with His mission. In times when we are treated with scorn and humiliation, it helps to remember what our Lord Jesus had to go through for us.

QUESTION 4:

There are three accusations against Peter, each one more intense than the preceding. In the first (vs 67), Peter is simply accused of being “with Jesus.” In the second (vs 69), he is accused of being “one of them.” In the third (vs 70), the accusation is more intense (“surely you are one of them”), plus Peter’s Galilean accent is cited as evidence that he was one of them. In each case the drama is heightened, as we feel the rope slowly but surely being slipped around Peter’s throat. The pressure intensifies with each

successive accusation. Although we do not hear any words from God, with each accusation you can *almost hear* the Lord speaking: “Peter, are you really going to go through with this and deny Me?”

QUESTION 5:

Peter’s initial response was remorse, evidenced by his weeping. According to Matt 27:3, Judas also “felt remorse” for what he had done. So, what is the difference? With Judas, the sorrow over his betrayal of Jesus did not lead to repentance. Instead, he went out and hanged himself, and was never reconciled with God. With Peter, however, his weeping led to reflection and then repentance before the Lord. This is evident considering several following events in the gospels themselves, not to mention Peter’s role in the book of Acts and in writing his epistles. John 21:15-19 was a tender time of reconciliation for Peter and Jesus (and for Peter to be reconfirmed by the Lord). The three denials by Peter before the crucifixion are balanced by his three confessions of love for Jesus after the resurrection. “Peter, do you love Me?” Yes! The Lord also signaled to Peter that one day he would have the opportunity to die for the Lord and thus literally fulfill Jesus’ challenge to “take up your cross and follow Me.”

QUESTION 6:

Jesus’ reply seems to suggest that He answered with a *qualified yes*. Probably what Jesus meant was “yes, but not exactly in the way you might be thinking.” From Pilate’s point of view, he was merely concerned about political kingdoms and any possible threat to Rome. At this moment in history, Judea had no Jewish king but rather was governed by a Roman military officer appointed by the Roman Senate. That was Pilate. Jesus had no intention whatsoever of trying to overthrow the Roman Empire to establish himself as a king, and thus was no threat to Pilate. He was not leading a political rebellion at all. The kingdom that Jesus envisioned was first and foremost a *spiritual kingdom* composed of those who put their faith in Him, were born again, and received the Holy Spirit (beginning at Pentecost). Eventually, the kingdoms of the world would be confronted (at His second coming) and brought under His rule on earth. Yet Jesus would not need to do this by leading an army against Rome.

QUESTION 7:

The text (Mk 15:7) clearly says that Barabbas had participated in “the insurrection” and had even murdered someone while doing so. He was also a robber (Jn 18:40). Possibly Barabbas may have belonged to the movement of the “Zealots,” i.e., Jews who fought for liberation from Rome. In any case, he was clearly guilty of treason against Rome, for he had literally fought against Rome. Ironically, a man who was truly guilty of insurrection against Rome (as Barabbas had been) was preferred over Jesus, one who was falsely accused of treason against Rome on the basis of aspiring to be a king. This preference for Barabbas only added to the condemnation of that generation of Jews that rejected Jesus as Messiah.

QUESTION 8:

According to verse 15, Pilate handed Jesus over for crucifixion, not because he was convinced of any true guilt in Jesus, but because he wished “to satisfy the crowd.” Also notice verse 14, when Pilate asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” Unfortunately, Pilate lacked true character as a political leader, and readily dispensed of Jesus just to win favor with the crowd. He was more concerned about *looking good*

and winning the favor of this crowd of people than he was in doing what was right by upholding justice. Of course, in this respect, Pilate is like many political leaders that have appeared on the stage of history. One day the Lord Jesus will usher in His kingdom upon earth, and He will insure that justice and righteousness are upheld. Until then, however, we will have to live in a fallen world in which self-centered leaders often hold political power.

QUESTION 9:

Your answer. The same principle that Jesus lived by also applies to us. In Rev 2:25-27 Jesus said, “Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.” For those who remain faithful to Jesus, whatever must be endured in this age will one day be worth it all.

QUESTION 10:

Your answer. The humility of Jesus is the model for the humility that ought to govern our lives.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 13 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 True

QUESTION 2

C. Jesus was speaking metaphorically (referring to His own body as a temple). If the Jews were to destroy Him, yet He would build a new temple in the Spirit (referring to the church).

QUESTION 3

Answers “B,” “C” and “D” are all correct.

QUESTION 4

Blasphemy

QUESTION 5

B. He was placing himself under oath, calling for a curse from God if found lying.

QUESTION 6 True

QUESTION 7 False (Mark does not include Jesus’ appearance before Herod)

QUESTION 8

D. They accused Jesus of rebelling against Rome by declaring Himself the “king of the Jews.”

QUESTION 9 False

QUESTION 10

Purple (or scarlet)

Lesson Fourteen: Jesus' Crucifixion on the Cross and His Resurrection: Mk 15:21--16:20

Lesson Introduction

This lesson brings us to the most solemn episode of Mark's gospel, namely, the death of Jesus on the cross. Some skeptics today may claim that Jesus never died on a cross, while others may deny that it makes any difference to us today. Others will assert that it would be impossible for God to die on a cross, or that God would never allow Himself to be shamed by man in this manner. The truth is that Jesus--God in human form--was sent from heaven, and He really did die on the cross. That is how strongly God wanted to show His love for you and for me! Mark does not record all the details of the crucifixion, for which one would need to read all the gospel accounts to get the full story. However, Mark did provide a sufficient account of the crucifixion for his Roman readers that culminated with the remarkable words from the lips of no less than a Roman centurion (an unbiased observer), "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39).

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Crucifixion (15:21-32)
- Topic 2: The Death of Jesus (15:33-41)
- Topic 3: The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)
- Topic 4: Jesus' Resurrection Appearance to the Women at the Tomb (16:1-8)
- Topic 5: The Conclusion to Mark's Gospel (16:9-20)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain in greater detail what was involved in the ancient practice of crucifixion and the suffering that the victim would go through.
- Indicate how the crucifixion of Jesus, His death, and His burial fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies.
- Defend the historical fact that Jesus really was crucified and died, and why the resurrection of Jesus could not have been "faked" by His disciples.

Topic 1 -- The Crucifixion (15:21-32)

Parallel Passages: Mt 27:32-44; Lk 23:26-43; Jn 19:16-27



To better understand the punishment of crucifixion and the significance of the events that happened, read the biblical text first (Mk 15:21-32) and then the following commentary.

Commentary: Mark 15:21-32

All four gospel accounts record Jesus' crucifixion and death, although with some variation in how the details are reported.

Jesus' Crucifixion and the Mockery of the Crowd (Mk 15:21-32)

15:21-22. *The march to Golgotha.* Customarily a condemned man was required to carry the crossbeam to the place of execution. This might weigh 200 kilograms or more. Jesus began the march (along with two other criminals), but soon gave out, probably being too weak from the flogging He had received. A man named Simon from Cyrene (a coastal city of N. Africa in present day Libya) was pressed into duty to carry the beam the rest of the way. He may have been a pilgrim who was visiting Jerusalem during the Passover festival.

The execution took place at a site called *Golgotha* not far outside the city wall (Jn 19:20). *Golgotha* was an Aramaic term, and Mark translated it for the sake of his Gentile readers as "the place of a skull," probably due to the resemblance of the rocky knoll to the shape of a human skull. The exact location is not known today. The traditional site is at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (inside the present-day city walls), although a more recent suggestion has been "Gordon's Calvary" (a short walk outside the present-day city walls). Yet the location of the city walls of Jerusalem in Jesus' day was different than that of today, so that both suggestions for *Golgotha* are outside the first-century city walls.

15:23-26. *The crucifixion of Jesus.* As an act of mercy, according to Rabbinic tradition certain Jerusalem women would provide sedative drinks for those about to be crucified (compare Prov 31:6-7). In this case, wine mixed with myrrh (a resin from a small thorny tree) was offered to Jesus, presumably by the Roman soldiers. Such a drink would serve to desensitize a person from the pain. Although Jesus tasted it (Matt 27:34), He refused to drink it, choosing instead to face the full effect of the suffering of the cross and to be in control of all His faculties. Mark's Roman readers needed no explanation of crucifixion, as it was a customary practice in that day. Once a person's body was affixed to the cross and hoisted upright, it might take two or three days for them to slowly die. Death was usually by asphyxiation, as a person became too weak to lift his body to breathe. This was accompanied by extreme exhaustion and thirst. In some cases, the legs of the victim would be broken to hasten their death (Jn 19:31-33), but in Jesus' case there was no need to do so, as He died relatively quickly. He was probably already "near death" because of the flogging the Romans had given Him (Mk 15:15). James R. Edwards, in his commentary on Mark describes

the brutality this involved:

“As a prelude to crucifixion, Josephus (*War* 2.306) says the prisoner was stripped and bound to a post and beaten with a leather whip woven with bits of bone or metal. No maximum number of strokes was prescribed. The scourging lacerated and stripped the flesh, often exposing bones and entrails. One of its purposes was to shorten the duration of crucifixion, but scourging was so brutal that some prisoners died before reaching the cross.¹²

Normally the one being crucified would be stripped of his garments, except for possibly a loincloth. Mark records that the soldiers cast lots to see who would have Jesus’ garment, and in doing so fulfilled Ps 22:18 (“they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots;” NASB). Jesus was crucified early on Friday morning at the “third hour,” i.e., 9 A.M. The time He hung on the cross was approximately six hours.

The Roman custom was to write the name of the condemned man and a description of his crime on a board that would be attached to the cross. This was done at Pilate’s instruction and in three languages as “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” (Jn 19:17). Mark simply recorded the official verdict: “The King of the Jews.” Although Pilate probably intended this in mockery and perhaps as an insult to Jewish aspirations for independence, it was appropriate, for Jesus was indeed the true King of the Jews (though His kingdom was not of this world).

15:27-32. *The mockery by the crowd.* In being crucified between the two criminals, this itself fulfilled the prophecy of Isa 53:12 (“He was numbered with the transgressors”). Yet by His death on the cross, “He Himself bore the sin of many” (Isa 53:12; NASB). Passersby, not realizing what His death was accomplishing, hurled insults at Him. They mocked His claim of destroying and rebuilding the temple (recall this charge falsely brought against Him at His interrogation before the Sanhedrin; Mk 14:58). They also mocked Him for not *saving* Himself (physically). Ironically, He did not come down from the cross, just so He could *save* others (spiritually). Yet the Father would *save* Jesus at the appropriate moment, after the work of redemption had been accomplished, by resurrecting Him from the grave and causing Him to ascend to the right hand of God. Finally, the mockers ridiculed the notion of Jesus being the King of Israel (Mk 15:32). If He could do a miracle like coming down from the cross, they suggested they would believe in Him. Naturally Jesus did not fall for such a line. It was for this purpose He had been sent into the world (Jn 12:27).

During the crucifixion scene, the two criminals both initially mocked Him as well (Mk 15:32). Before Jesus died, however, one of them felt remorse and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom (Lk 23:39-42). Jesus assured Him, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43), a reference to the place that righteous souls would go to await the eventual resurrection of their bodies (compare “Abraham’s bosom” in Lk 16:23).

Question 1

According to the commentary, what was the purpose of offering Jesus “wine mixed with myrrh,” and why did Jesus refuse it?

¹² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 464.

One of the amazing things about Jesus' crucifixion is the fact that so many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled at this time. Look up Psalm 22:16-18 and then compare Mark 15:24. Psalm 22, written by David about 1000 years before Jesus lived on earth, has several verses that find fulfillment in Jesus.

Question 2

How do you explain the fact that Psalm 22 is fulfilled in Jesus? Do you think the cross was part of God's plan for Jesus long before He was born? How could you use this in a conversation with someone who claims that Jesus never died on a cross?

Mark 15:27-32 focuses on the taunting of others who challenged Jesus to save Himself and come down from the cross. In fact, Jesus could have proved that He was the Messiah by delivering Himself from this situation and overpowering the Roman soldiers.

Question 3

Look at Mk 15:32 closely. Some people told Jesus that they would "believe" if He would just come down from the cross (thereby proving He was the Messiah). Do you think they were being sincere? Why or why not? What would be wrong with Jesus choosing to come down from the cross in this fashion, if some might believe as a result?

Topic 2 -- The Death of Jesus (15:33-41)

Parallel Passages: Mt 27:45-56; Lk 23:44-49; Jn 19:28-30

The crucifixion of Jesus took place on a Friday morning, starting at 9:00 A.M., the third hour (Mk 15:25).¹³ At the sixth hour (12 o'clock noon), darkness fell across the land and continued until 3:00 P.M. in the afternoon (Mk 15:33). The darkness was probably a cosmic sign of God's judgment on human sin, which was being borne by Jesus.



Reading:

In preparation for understanding the death of Jesus, read the biblical text first and then the following commentary.

Commentary: Mark 15:33-41

Jesus' Death and the Accompanying Phenomena (Mk 15:33-41)

15:33. *The darkness of the day.* After three hours of hanging on the cross in the daylight (since 9 A.M.), darkness fell upon the land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (from noon until 3 P.M.) . . . an ominous sign reflecting the significance of what was taking place. God was judging the sin of all humanity as Jesus bore that sin on the cross.

15:34-36. *Jesus' agonizing cry to the Father.* Around 3 P.M., Jesus cried out uttering (in Aramaic) the words of Ps 22:1, which Mark translated for his Roman readers, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He said this, because He was bearing the curse of sin and God's judgment on sin (Deut 21:22-23; Gal 3:13; Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21). In doing so, He gave Himself as the *ransom price* to free us--we who are undeserving sinners--from the captivity of sin and to make forgiveness possible for us (Mk 10:45). Although He had said *Eloi* ("My God"), some bystanders thought He was crying for *Elijah* to rescue Him (popular Judaism held a belief that Elijah would return in crisis moments to protect and rescue the righteous). Jesus also said, "I thirst" (Jn 19:28-29). In response, one soldier brought Him a sponge full of sour wine vinegar to drink from, perhaps an act of compassion amid the mockery.

15:37. *Jesus' death.* Upon tasting the sour wine, Mark indicated that Jesus uttered a loud cry. John notes that at this point Jesus declared, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). This indicated He had been faithful to accomplish the mission for which the Father had sent Him (He had died for the sins of all mankind). Luke adds an additional detail: "Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!'" (Lk 23:46). The words were a quotation of Ps 31:5 in which the righteous, innocent sufferer trusts in God. Hence, this reflected Jesus' perfect trust in the Father to preserve Him. Then He breathed His last and died. His physical human body now hung lifeless on the cross.

¹³ In Jewish reckoning, the daylight hours were measured from 6:00 A.M. in the morning, the approximate time of sunrise. John, however, indicated that Pilate's verdict occurred at the sixth hour (Jn 19:14), but John was apparently using the Roman method of counting hours from midnight (and noon).

15:38-39. *Significant observations at the time of Jesus' death.* Several unusual things happened following Jesus' death. Mark notes (15:38) that the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The direction of the tear (from top to bottom) was to indicate this was an action of God, not accidental, and would have been observed by the priests on duty who at that very time were conducting the Jewish evening sacrifice and "the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). Most likely this referred to the veil separating the main temple chamber from the Holy of Holies. It signified that access to God had now been opened by a new and living way through Christ's blood, and animal sacrifices were no longer needed. Matthew records that an earthquake took place, and some tombs were opened while some saints that had died were raised to life (Matt 27:52-53).

The Roman centurion who had stood right in front of Jesus' cross, upon experiencing the unusual phenomena like the darkness and earthquake and upon observing how composed Jesus was in His agonizing death, blurted out, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39). The centurion may not have meant this in the sense of His being deity; perhaps he was thinking more of His innocence (Lk 23:47). Yet, whatever the centurion may have intended by his words, Mark regarded the declaration as a fitting pronouncement at the moment . . . especially coming from a Roman Gentile. The centurion's confession was thus the climax of Mark's revelation of Jesus' identity (recall Mk 1:1; 8:29-30).

15:40-41. *A note about the women at the crucifixion.* The final two verses of this unit focus on the women who were present to witness the crucifixion. Mark mentions several by name, including Mark Magdalene (who had been delivered of demon possession; Lk 8:2), another Mary (mother of James and Joses), as well as Salome (apparently the mother of the apostles James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Matt 4:21; 20:20; 27:56). All three of these women witnessed the place of His burial (Mk 15:47) and were also at the tomb on Sunday, the morning of Jesus' resurrection (Mk 16:1). They were just a few of the many women who had faithfully been a part of Jesus' earthly ministry and had ministered to Him. Their devotion was an example for other women to follow.

Question 4

At 3:00 P.M. in the afternoon, Jesus cried out to God with a loud voice. His words, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani" are a transliteration from Aramaic, meaning "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The words are taken from Ps 22:1. Some of the bystanders mistakenly thought He was calling for Elijah the prophet (the word "Eloi" means "My God," but sounds like the name Elijah). Had God the Father actually "forsaken" His Son? What was the meaning to Jesus' words? To help you answer the question, compare Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 2:24.

Did Jesus really die on the cross? The Roman soldiers who comprised the execution squad were led by a Roman centurion, an officer usually in charge of 100 men but sometimes smaller.

According to Mk 15:39, this officer in charge (the centurion) was standing directly in front of Jesus. He was not a disciple of Jesus but was an unbiased observer, standing in perfect position to witness what actually happened (in contrast to those who might have looked on from afar). Yet this man affirmed that Jesus truly died (“He breathed His last”).

Question 5

One of the strange things that happened at the time of Jesus’ death was that “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mk 15:38). Where was this veil in relation to the other rooms of the temple? To help you answer this, read Hebrews 9:1-3. What was behind the veil?

Obviously, the priests of the temple did not tear this veil, which suggests that God Himself did it . . . just at the moment that Jesus died. In days past, the veil separated the Holy of Holies where God’s presence dwelt from the main room of the temple. With the veil torn, the way to the mercy seat above the ark was now *wide open*. The significance of this is probably to be understood in light of the change of covenants. The death of Christ marked the end of the old covenant (originally given at Mt. Sinai) and the beginning of the new covenant. Christ had entered the *heavenly* Holy of Holies on our behalf with His own blood, and now we have free access to God’s presence. Cf. Hebrews 9:6-10.

Topic 3 -- The Burial of Jesus (15:42-47)

Parallel Passages: Mt 27:57-61; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:38-42

Mark now introduces us to a man called “Joseph of Arimathea,” one of the Jewish religious leaders who also belonged to the Sanhedrin. In John 19:38 we are told that he was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews. Now, however, he needed to be more courageous to step forward and ask for the body of Jesus. [Joseph was probably present at the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, which explains how Mark and others would have had information about what took place there]. By noting that it was “the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath),” Mark clarified that Jesus died on a Friday. Joseph needed to work quickly to bury Jesus’ body before sundown of that day, both because the Sabbath was near and because of the injunction in Deut 21:22-23 concerning a body that had been hanged on a tree.

Question 6

How does Joseph's request provide additional evidence that Jesus really died on the cross? Do we have credible witnesses for Jesus' death?

Question 7

Let's see what additional significance Joseph has for us. Look up Matthew 27:57, and record what you discover about him. Also take note of Matt 27:60. In whose tomb was Jesus laid? Now look up Isaiah 53:9, and explain how Joseph relates to the prediction of Isaiah (given 700 years before Jesus' birth!).

Topic 4 -- Jesus' Resurrection Appearance to the Women at the Tomb (16:1-8)

Parallel Passages: Mt 28:1-8; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-13

Interestingly, in the final chapters of Mark we see a prominent role given to women (note 15:40-41, 47 in addition to 16:1-8). The resurrection is a highly significant event in the account of Jesus (the proof that Jesus was really the Son of God!), and yet women--not the twelve--are the first to discover this. Furthermore, the resurrected Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9; cf. Matt 28:8-9). That the empty tomb and resurrection were first disclosed to women who in turn reported it to the disciples argues strongly for the authenticity of the event. Had this been a made-up story constructed by the church, we would have expected the disclosure to have been given directly to the male disciples, for a woman's testimony in that culture would generally not have been regarded as highly as a man's.

One of the most important questions in all of history is this: *what became of the body of Jesus?* I suppose a skeptic could say that the disciples of Jesus stole the body and then hid it, to "fake" the resurrection of Jesus. The problem with this theory, however, is this: who moved the stone that was placed in front of the tomb? Jesus, who had just gone through the ordeal of crucifixion could certainly not have done so (even if He had not really died).

Question 8

Could someone on the outside of the tomb have moved the stone? Read Mark 16:3-4 and then compare Matthew 27:62-66. How do these verses make it virtually impossible for anyone to have moved the stone from the outside?

Question 9

Some skeptic might even suggest that the women and the disciples went to *the wrong tomb* to look for Jesus, and that they only thought He was resurrected because they did not find His body. What problems do you see with this theory?

Topic 5 -- The Conclusion to Mark's Gospel (16:9-20)

Mark's treatment of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus differs significantly from the other gospel accounts. Mark's conclusion is also short and succinct (especially compared to Luke and John). Perhaps this is due to Mark's theme for the book. He began in Mk 1:1 with the statement that Jesus Christ was "the Son of God." Throughout the book, he has drawn a good portrait of what this means. Finally, with the statement from the centurion, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39) and with the confirmation of the resurrection, Mark's gospel has come full circle. The question of Jesus' identity and what this means for those who would follow Him as disciples has now been answered.

1. **Mary Magdalene's Report of the Resurrection (16:9-11)**
2. **The Resurrection Appearance to the Two Men (16:12-13)**
3. **The Resurrection Appearance to the Eleven and the Great Commission (16:14-18)**

The eleven remaining disciples had trouble believing in the resurrection of Christ, even after hearing reports of His resurrection. Note Mark 16:9-11 and 16:14. There is no doubt that they were reluctant to believe the resurrection reports in the beginning. Obviously, they believed after seeing Him with their own eyes (see John 20:19-21), though it was over a week later before Thomas saw the Lord and believed (John 20:24-29).

Question 10

History records that all the original eleven disciples (with the possible exception of John) were martyred for their faith. If they did not believe that Jesus' resurrection was true, does it make any sense that they would have died for a lie? Look up John 20:24-31, and notice especially verse 29. Do you believe in Jesus' resurrection even though you have not seen Him yourself? Why or why not?

Comments on Mark 16:16 about baptism:

“The one who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Does this mean, then, that baptism is a necessary condition for spiritual salvation? According to Grassmick, Mark links the actions of believing and baptism “together in describing the inward, efficacious reception of the gospel by faith (believing) and the outward, public expression of that faith in water baptism. Though the New Testament writers generally assume that under normal circumstances each believer will be baptized, 16:16 does not mean that baptism is a necessary requirement for personal salvation. The second half of the verse indicates by contrast that one who **does not believe** the gospel **will be condemned** by God (implied) in the day of final judgment (cf. 9:43-48). The basis for condemnation is unbelief, not the lack of any ritual observance. Baptism is not mentioned because unbelief precludes one's giving a confession of faith while being baptized by water. Thus, the only requirement for personally appropriating God's salvation is faith in Him (cf. Rom. 3:21-28; Eph. 2:8-10).”¹⁴

4. The Ascension of Jesus and the Faithful Response of the Disciples (16:19-20)

Question 11

As you think back over this lesson, what vital truth did you learn about the person of Jesus. Write this in your Life Notebook.

Question 12

What did you learn from this lesson about what Jesus wants you to be or to do as His disciple? Write this in your Life Notebook.

¹⁴ John Grassmick, “Mark,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:196.

Lesson 14 Self Check

QUESTION 1

During the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers broke the legs of Jesus and the two other criminals, so that they would die more quickly and not be left hanging on the Sabbath. *True or false?*

QUESTION 2

The crucifixion of Jesus fulfilled several verses from what two major Old Testament passages?

- A. Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 32
- B. Isaiah 7 and Zechariah 12
- C. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53
- D. Psalm 16 and Isaiah 11

QUESTION 3

During His crucifixion, Jesus was offered wine mixed with “myrrh” (Mk 15:22). What is “myrrh”?

- A. A type of gummy substance that lifted one’s spirits, because of its sweet-smelling odor.
- B. A resin from a type of thorny tree that could be used to desensitize a person from pain.
- C. A sweet-tasting flower that made the wine more intoxicating.
- D. A type of tree resin that, when mixed with wine, gives a person extreme energy.

QUESTION 4

While on the cross, Jesus cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”, using the word *Eloi* for “My God.” But some of the bystanders thought he said the name _____, the Old Testament prophet (as though he were crying out for the prophet’s help).

QUESTION 5

What were the two last sayings that Jesus uttered on the cross before He breathed His last and died? [Choose two of the following].

- A. “It is finished”
- B. “I am thirsty”
- C. “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”
- D. “Today you will be with Me in Paradise”

QUESTION 6

After Jesus breathed His last and died, who said “Truly this man was the Son of God!”?

- A. The disciple John who was standing beside Jesus’ mother.
- B. Pontius Pilate who had sentenced Jesus to be crucified.
- C. An unnamed bystander who had given Jesus the drink of sour wine.
- D. The Roman centurion who had stood right in front of the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

QUESTION 7

What do we know about Joseph of Arimathea, the man who arranged the burial of Jesus?

- A. He had been a Jewish religious leader and a member of the Sanhedrin.
- B. Later in history, he wrote *The Antiquities of the Jews*.
- C. He was a rich man who gave his own newly hewn tomb for Jesus’ burial.
- D. Prior to Jesus’ death on a cross, he had been a secret disciple for fear of the Jews.

QUESTION 8

The first person that the resurrected Jesus appeared to was _____.

QUESTION 9

Why would it have been virtually impossible for anyone on the outside of the tomb to have moved the stone and stolen the body of Jesus?

- A. The chief priests and Pharisees had been given instructions by Pilate to make the grave as secure as they knew how (and they did!).
- B. Guards were placed at the tomb to make sure no one would attempt to open the tomb.
- C. A “seal” was set on the stone to ensure that no one would tamper with moving the stone.
- D. The stone weighed over 500 kilograms and would have required 45 men to move the stone.

QUESTION 10

When Mary Magdalene announced to the disciples that she had seen Jesus alive, they immediately rejoiced, because they had been certain He would be resurrected. *True or False?*

Lesson 14 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Crucifixion was one of the most painful forms of capital punishment ever devised. To decrease the pain for victims, a sedative drink was prepared and offered them. Sap from the plant myrrh was mixed with wine, which would dull the senses and help numb them from the excruciating pain. Although Jesus tasted it (Matt 27:34), He declined to drink it. This meant that He chose to face the full torment of His suffering and death (the equivalent of not being given anesthetic today before a surgery). Although He was already beaten badly, He wanted to be in as much control of His thinking as possible. As He tasted death for all of us (not merely physical death, but the wrath of God against our sin), He did not choose to escape the pain of all that this meant.

QUESTION 2:

All the Old Testament was written before Jesus was ever born in Bethlehem. [We know this for a fact, because all the OT was translated into Greek about 300-200 B.C.]. The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies is some of the strongest evidence that we have for our faith in Jesus Christ. The only way that one can explain these prophecies is to acknowledge that God must have given them, because He is the only one that could know such details about the future. But if God knew about the cross and even gave prophecies of it long beforehand, then the cross must be part of His plan and therefore it is true. There are many OT prophecies about Jesus. If I were in a conversation with an unbeliever, it would be a great idea to look some of these up and ask him/her to read them. If that person did not want to see them, then you might try writing the verses down on a piece of paper and tell him to look them up later when he was alone. [This could be a good opportunity to give the unbeliever a Bible, so he could do this].

QUESTION 3:

Although the onlookers said that they would “believe” if Jesus were to come down from the cross, it is very doubtful that they were sincere. Notice the whole context, both before and after this statement. The context is one of people hurling abuse at Him, mocking Him, and insulting Him. Hence, they only said this in Mk 15:32 in mockery. They had no intention of believing. Most likely Satan was working through these mockers, hoping that Jesus would not go through with dying on the cross. As Jesus died on the cross, He did not merely die physically. He died for our sins. He paid the penalty that we deserved as sinners before a Holy God. If He had not done this, God could not have just overlooked our sins. He would have had to pronounce us guilty of our sins and condemn us to be punished. By dying for our sins, Jesus became both the high priest and the sin offering for us at the same time. Read Hebrews 9:11-12.

QUESTION 4:

In one way, God the Father had “forsaken” Jesus, but not in the sense that He no longer cared for Jesus. On the cross, Jesus was not merely going through physical death; He was bearing the wrath of God against the sins of all humanity. At this unique moment of time, the Father had to turn His back (figuratively speaking) on the Son, because Jesus was bearing the “curse” against our sin (note Gal 3:13). As it is said in 1 Peter 2:24, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.”

QUESTION 5:

The veil that Mark mentions was the veil of the temple that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Each day, one of the priests would enter the Holy Place (the outer room) to perform assorted services. But into the Holy of Holies, only the high priest could enter there, and he could only do so once a year (on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement). Inside the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, and on top of the ark was the “mercy seat,” on which the high priest placed the blood of animals on the Day of Atonement. This animal blood did not provide eternal forgiveness before God. Yet Jesus entered the *heavenly* tabernacle (the very presence of God) with His own blood (not animal blood), and He obtained eternal redemption for us.

QUESTION 6:

Joseph of Arimathea was in an awkward position. Even though he was a member of the Sanhedrin, he had become convinced that Jesus was really the Messiah. Then he put his faith in Jesus, and became one of Jesus’ disciples. Initially, however, he did this secretly (probably only telling a few trusted friends). Yet the Lord prompted his heart to go to Pilate, the Roman governor, and ask for the body of Jesus to bury Him. He took a notable risk in doing this, as the news could have leaked to others and exposed his relationship to Jesus. Pilate, however, was not willing to grant his request, until he knew for sure that Jesus had been confirmed dead. So, Pilate sent for the Roman centurion (the officer in charge of the execution squad) and obtained confirmation from him that Jesus had indeed died. What is compelling in this is that confirmation of Jesus’ death is not based on the testimony of Jesus’ disciples, but upon these two very important Roman military officers (even Pilate himself!) who had no loyalty to Jesus at all. The centurion would not have reported to Pilate that Jesus had died, if indeed Jesus had not really died.

QUESTION 7:

According to Matt 27:57, Joseph of Arimathea was a *rich man* (which should not surprise us, given that he was a member of the Sanhedrin). However, Isaiah prophesied of the “the suffering servant” (i.e., the Messiah): “His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death.” Usually, wicked men are buried in common places, not in honorable ones. Jesus was “assigned with wicked men,” in the sense that He died along with common criminals, most notably the two thieves beside Him on the cross. Yet when Jesus was buried, He was placed in Joseph’s own personal tomb (so Matt 27:60), and thus in the tomb of a *rich man*, just as Isaiah had prophesied.

QUESTION 8:

The women who came first to the tomb definitely did not move the stone. It was entirely too large and heavy for them to have done so. Yet according to Matt 27:62-66, it was virtually impossible that any men would have done so, either. The Jewish leaders were foresighted enough to have thought of the possibility of Jesus’ disciples stealing the body to “fake” a resurrection. Therefore, they collaborated with Pilate to make sure that no one tampered with the stone. A guard was placed at the entrance, the grave was made secure, and finally they set a seal on the stone. This is solid evidence that no one moved the stone and stole the body of Jesus. The evidence is clear that Jesus had to have been resurrected and that God moved the stone (or commanded angels to do so).

QUESTION 9:

The theory that the real tomb was “lost” simply does not hold up to the evidence. We cannot accept the suggestion that the women went to the wrong tomb. First, Matt 27:60-61 tells us that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary watched them put Jesus in the tomb when it happened. They would not have forgotten where the tomb was. Second, we cannot overlook Mark 16:6 which indicates that the women had a conversation with a “stranger” (an angel), who confirmed that Jesus had indeed been lying inside this tomb. Third, we cannot forget about Joseph of Arimathea himself. This was his tomb, and he knew exactly where Jesus had been buried. There was no mistake about the location of the tomb!

QUESTION 10:

These eleven disciples were absolutely convinced of the truthfulness of Jesus’ resurrection. It would be virtually impossible that all eleven of them would have lived out their lives without at least one of them confessing that it was a hoax, especially given the fact that nearly all of them died as martyrs. We can also be convinced of Jesus’ resurrection, for this is the bedrock of our faith. No one has ever disproved the resurrection of our Lord. Jesus’ words to Thomas are for us: “Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Personally, I also believe in Jesus’ resurrection because of 1 Corin 15:3-8. Over five hundred brethren saw Him at one time, and many of these were still living when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. If the statement were not true, many could have challenged what Paul wrote.

QUESTION 11: Your answer.

QUESTION 12: Your answer.

Lesson 14 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1 False

QUESTION 2

C. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53

QUESTION 3

B. A resin from a type of thorny tree that could be used to desensitize a person from pain.

QUESTION 4

Elijah

QUESTION 5

Both A (“It is finished”) and C (“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit”)

QUESTION 6

D. The Roman centurion who had stood right in front of the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

QUESTION 7

All are correct except for “B.” [It was Josephus, the Jewish historian, that wrote *The Antiquities of the Jews*].

QUESTION 8

Mary Magdalene

QUESTION 9

All are correct except for “D.” [Mark 16:4 indicates that the stone was “extremely large,” but nothing is said about its actual weight or the number of men required to move it].

QUESTION 10

False [Mk 16:11 states, “And when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe”].

Unit 3 Exam: Following the Master

QUESTION 1

In Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He sat upon the colt of a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

When Jesus cleansed an area of the temple complex known as the "court of the Gentiles," He defended His actions by citing Isaiah 56:7, "My house will be called a house of _____ for all nations."

QUESTION 3

At the time Jesus was questioned about resurrection, the Jewish leaders had different opinions: the Pharisees accepted the doctrine of bodily resurrection but the Sadducees did not. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

In the Parable of the Vineyard, Jesus announced (as part of the judgment on the unfaithful vine-growers) that the vineyard would be "given to others." What did Jesus mean by this?

- A. Jesus meant that religious authority would be given to a new high priest of the Jews.
- B. Jesus meant that the new authority for God on earth would be the Roman Catholic church.
- C. Jesus meant that the Jews would be exiled, and their land would be given to the Romans.
- D. Jesus meant that the privilege and responsibility for God's kingdom program would be given to the community of those who believed in Him as Messiah (that is, to the "church").

QUESTION 5

When Jesus was attacked by the Sadducees concerning the doctrine of resurrection in Mark 12, He defended this doctrine by appealing to what verse?

- A. Psalm 16:10 - "You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."
- B. John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life."
- C. Ex 3:6 - "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
- D. Daniel 12:2 - "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

QUESTION 6

When Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 to the religious leaders in the temple ("The LORD said to my Lord, sit at my right hand"), His main purpose was to help them realize that God answers prayer.

QUESTION 7

How does Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse (Lk 21) differ from that of Matthew's and Mark's? [check all that are correct]

- A. Luke provides much more detail about the second coming of Christ.
- B. Luke does not include any of Christ's warnings about persecution for His disciples.
- C. Luke includes a paragraph describing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

- D. Luke stipulates that following Jerusalem's destruction, the city will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

QUESTION 8

Jesus' prediction of the "abomination of desolation" in the Olivet Discourse (Mk 13) will be fulfilled in the future tribulation period with what event?

- A. The earthquake that destroys most of the world.
- B. The destruction of God's two witnesses in Jerusalem.
- C. The Antichrist killing Christians all over the world.
- D. The Antichrist (or his image) entering the temple.

QUESTION 9

How can we reconcile the doctrine of Jesus' deity with His own admission that He did not know the "day and hour" of His coming?

- A. These cannot be reconciled, and this is proof that Jesus was not really God in the flesh.
- B. Within the Trinity, it was the Father's role to determine the times and epochs of history, and since Jesus in His incarnation voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father (He did nothing on His own but was completely dependent upon the Father), this fact had simply not been revealed to Him.
- C. Since Jesus was truly human and had to grow in knowledge and wisdom, He still had more things to learn including this deep dark secret known only to the Father.
- D. Since the return of Christ depended on the "times of the Gentiles" being fulfilled, the date was flexible and therefore even Jesus did not know the exact time.

QUESTION 10

When Jesus comes again "in clouds with great power and glory," will this be *before* or *after* the Great Tribulation? _____

QUESTION 11

As we observe Judas' criticism of Mary for anointing Jesus' feet with perfume and later Judas' betrayal of Jesus, we realize that a root problem in Judas' life was a love for _____.

QUESTION 12

Which of the following statements is *not true* about the Passover meal and celebration?

- A. The original Passover meal is described in Genesis 12:1-3.
- B. Following the Passover meal, the Hebrews were to eat unleavened bread for seven days.
- C. Since the unblemished Passover lamb represented the Lord Jesus Christ, the shedding of the blood of the lamb anticipated the shedding of Christ's blood at the cross, the latter being the blood that inaugurated the new covenant.
- D. The primary Old Testament passage announcing the new covenant was Jer 31:31-34.

QUESTION 13

At the Last Supper, Jesus announced that the wine represented the new covenant in His blood. The new covenant had been predicted in Jeremiah 31. What was the primary benefit of this new covenant according to Jeremiah? _____

QUESTION 14

When did Jesus say, "Yet not what I will, but what you will"?

- A. Jesus said this while hanging on the cross.
- B. Jesus said this at the Last Supper.
- C. Jesus said this while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- D. Jesus said this to His disciples when He left them to ascend to God the Father.

QUESTION 15

Of the following discouragements that Jesus faced at the time of His arrest in the garden, which one is not correct?

- A. That the disciples keeping watch had failed to stay awake
- B. That the servant of the high priest cut off the ear of one of the disciples
- C. That those arresting Him acted as though He were a common criminal
- D. That Judas would betray Him with a kiss

QUESTION 16

In Jesus' day, the Jewish Sanhedrin was a council of some seventy Jewish religious leaders, presided over by the high priest Caiaphas, who were responsible for decisions concerning religious matters and who had the authority to impose the death penalty. *True or false?*

QUESTION 17

When Jesus was asked by the high priest if He were the Messiah, Jesus affirmed that He was and identified Himself with the "son of man" of Dan 7:13-14 who would be given a kingdom over which to rule. *True or false?*

QUESTION 18

When Jesus told the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin that they would see the "son of man" coming on the clouds of heaven, this was fulfilled at His ascension. *True or false?*

QUESTION 19

When the Lord asked Peter three times in John 21:15-19 if he loved Him and concluded by instructing Peter to "Tend My sheep," this was a reaffirmation to Peter that the Lord had forgiven him for denying Him three times on the night before the crucifixion. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

Pilate (the Roman Governor) handed Jesus over for crucifixion, because he was convinced that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy in violation of the Mosaic Law. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

The crucifixion of Jesus fulfilled several verses from what two major Old Testament passages?

- A. Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 32
- B. Isaiah 7 and Zechariah 12
- C. Psalm 16 and Isaiah 11
- D. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53

QUESTION 22

When Jesus was dying on the cross, He was offered "wine mixed with myrrh." Why did He refuse to drink this?

- A. He believed it was a sin to drink wine on the Jewish Passover.
- B. Jews were not allowed to drink wine that had been prepared by Gentiles.
- C. The drink was meant to dull His senses to not feel the pain, but He chose to endure it fully.
- D. The soldiers were drinking this in honor of the Roman gods, and joining them would be idolatry.

QUESTION 23

After Jesus breathed His last and died, who said "Truly this man was the Son of God!"?

- A. The disciple John who was standing beside Jesus' mother.
- B. Pontius Pilate who had sentenced Jesus to be crucified.
- C. The Roman centurion who had stood right in front of the cross on which Jesus was crucified.
- D. An unnamed bystander who had given Jesus the drink of sour wine.

QUESTION 24

At the moment Jesus died on the cross, the _____ in the temple was torn in two.

QUESTION 25

When Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus after the crucifixion, Pilate immediately granted his request without first making sure that Jesus had really died. *True or False?*

Appendix 1: The Gospel of Mark – Introductory Matters

AUTHORSHIP

The title “according to Mark” (*Kata Markon*) was not originally part of the manuscript but was added later (before A.D. 125). Yet the unanimous testimony from early church fathers is that Mark, the close associate of Peter, was the author. The earliest testimony of this comes from Papias, writing about A.D. 110 and quoting “John the Elder” (presumably the Apostle John). The following information from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor until about A.D. 130, was preserved by the ancient church historian Eusebius, writing in A.D. 325 (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15):

It is in the following words: “This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord’s discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” These things are related by Papias concerning Mark.

This evidence was subsequently confirmed by the testimony of Justin Martyr, the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue* to Mark, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and the writings of both Clement of Alexandria and Origin (the latter two cited by Eusebius). All but the last were from the second century A.D.

As to the identity of this “Mark,” most interpreters conclude that this was none other than John Mark, mentioned some ten times in the NT (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phile. 24; 1 Pet 5:13). It appears that John Mark had been a resident of Jerusalem at one time (note Acts 12:11-12), had become one of the early Hebrew Christians (though there is a question whether this was before or after the resurrection--cf. Mk 14:51-52), was a cousin to Barnabas (Col 4:10), and had been closely associated with both Paul (on the first missionary journey) and Peter (note 1 Pet 5:13). His close association with Peter would naturally explain his access to numerous details from Jesus’ life and ministry that enabled him to write this gospel account. Although he abandoned Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13)--which later became the source of conflict between the two apostles (Acts 15:36-41)--Paul eventually forgave and commended John Mark to others (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). Yet Barnabas, once he and Paul had separated, chose Mark to serve alongside him in ministry.

If “Babylon” mentioned in 1 Pet 5:13 is really a *veiled reference* to Rome (as most conservative scholars believe), this would imply that Mark had been in Rome with Peter and closely associated with him at the latter part of his life:

¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark.

According to the ancient church historian Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.5-8), both Paul and Peter were martyred in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero. It would have been quite natural for Peter to have left behind an account of Christ’s life prior to his own martyrdom, and this he was able to do with the help of his younger companion. Hence, Mark’s close link to Peter provided a firsthand resource for much of Mark’s information, not to mention that Mark would have personally heard many of Peter’s sermons. This would help account for the recollection of unusual detail in the narratives that suggests they were derived from such an “inner-circle” eyewitness as Peter (cf. 1:16–20, 29–31, 35–38; 5:21–24, 35–43; 6:39, 53–54; 9:14–15; 10:32, 46; 14:32–42). Mark’s gospel also vividly records Peter’s words and deeds (cf. 8:29, 32–33; 9:5–6; 10:28–30; 14:29–31, 66–72). That the influence of Peter lies behind much of Mark’s account is also supported by the way in which the twelve are pictured (more so than in any other gospel account) as cowardly, spiritually blind, and hard of heart. Only an apostle would have been able to have been so critical of the twelve. Not surprisingly Peter figures prominently in Mark, and some of the references are most naturally explained as coming from Peter (for example, the mention of Peter “remembering” in Mk 11:21 and 14:72).

In addition to the contributions by Peter, there is what Mark himself would have known from his Jewish origins in Judea and his firsthand experiences with the early Jerusalem church, not to mention what he would have learned in serving alongside Paul and Barnabas. Also, he would have been quite familiar with the geography of Palestine at that time, as well as Jewish customs, rituals, and festivals. Finally, though Mark himself was not regarded as an apostle, Peter’s authority in the early church as one of the chief apostles--and Mark’s known association with him--helped to give Mark’s gospel account immediate credibility in the early church as inspired Scripture.

DATE

The book itself makes no explicit statement regarding the date it was written. Proposals have been made for as early as the A.D. 40s to as late as the 70s, though most contemporary scholars tend to date Mark in the mid to late 60s. There is some evidence that Peter was in Rome in the mid-50s, making it possible to date Mark that early. [Peter was probably in Corinth before A.D. 55-56 when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (see 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22), and in Rome about 63 (the probable date of 1 Peter)].

Much of the debate concerns whether Mark wrote his account before or after Peter's death. Irenaeus's statement could be interpreted as implying Mark wrote after Peter's death: "After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what *had been preached* by Peter" (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.2). Yet Clement of Alexandria implied that Mark wrote before Peter's death:

When Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome and announced the gospel by the Spirit, those present, of whom there were many, besought Mark, since for a long time he had followed him and remembered what had been said, to record his words. Mark did this, and communicated the gospel to those who made request of him. When Peter knew of it, he neither actively prevented nor encouraged the undertaking.

[Recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.6-7].

Nero's famous persecution of Christians in Rome took place in A.D. 65, and tradition records that both Paul and Peter were martyred during Nero's reign (r. A.D. 54-68), probably around A.D. 67-68. Mark records Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction (Mark 13), but the fact that he makes no comment about the fulfillment of this at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70 suggests that his gospel account was written prior to A.D. 70. Hence all we can safely say is that Mark wrote his gospel account sometime during the period A.D. 55-69.

RELATIONSHIP OF MARK TO THE OTHER SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

One of the most puzzling challenges today for biblical scholars is the relationship of Mark to Matthew and Luke. While each of these accounts has its own peculiarities and emphases, there are a great many places where they seem to draw upon the same source(s). Related to this is the question of which account came first and whether the subsequent gospels quoted or relied upon the earlier one(s). Almost all the material in Mark's gospel is also found in Matthew and Luke (except for three pericopes: Mk 4:26-29; 7:31-37; and 8:22-26). Historically the Christian church relied primarily on Matthew's account and assumed it was the first of the gospels to have been written. Yet by the early nineteenth century, a radical shift on the value of Mark occurred, and scholars began to hypothesize that Mark was the *earliest* of the gospels and the primary source for Matthew and Luke. This theory of Markan priority--though not uncontested--continues to be held by the majority of scholars today. Yet although such questions as the order of the gospels and their relationship to one another certainly make for interesting study, the more critical issue is that of the spiritual lessons that Mark's gospel has to teach us.

PLACE OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

There is near unanimous agreement that Mark wrote his gospel from Rome, and this view has the support of early tradition. According to the anti-Marcionite prologue to Mark (late second century A.D.), Mark wrote his gospel "in the regions of Italy." This is also the view of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.2) and Clement of Alexandria (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*

6.14.6-7). Naturally if Mark had relied heavily upon Peter for his information, a Roman origin would be quite sensible (1 Pet 5:13).

One of the primary evidences for a Roman origin is the considerable number of *Latinisms* in the gospel. For example, Mark explains that the widow's two copper coins equal a *kodrantēs*, a Roman coin (12:42), and notes the "courtyard" (*aulē*) as being a *praitōrion*, a distinctively Roman/Latin name (15:16). The fact that Jewish customs are explained (cf. 7:3–4; 14:12; 15:42), and Aramaic expressions are translated into Greek (cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34) would be expected, given a Gentile audience. The many allusions to suffering in Mark's gospel would have been particularly appropriate if it had been written under the shadow of persecutions of the church in Rome (particularly if it was written in the mid-60s during Nero's Christian persecutions). The fact that at a climactic point in the gospel a Gentile Roman centurion unwittingly proclaimed Jesus' deity (cf. 15:39) would certainly have been of interest to Roman readers, despite the fact Matthew and Luke also include this note.

If Mark indeed wrote his gospel account in Rome, the simplest inference is that he probably wrote to Roman Christians. Also of interest is the fact that Mark, after writing his gospel in Rome, may have been the first to have brought a gospel account to Egypt. In Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.16.1) we read, "They say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt, and that he proclaimed the gospel which he had written, and first established churches in Alexandria."

PRIMARY THEMES AND PURPOSE

Mark's account is the shortest of the four gospels. Yet one characteristic of Mark is the fast-moving action of the narrative (signaled by the 40 occurrences of the word "immediately"). There is a strong focus on the activity of Jesus and particularly His working of miracles, His power over nature, and His authority over the demonic realm. Following Jesus' stilling of the storm, Mark notes the reaction of the disciples in the boat with Him, "They became very much afraid and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" Also of interest is the extended treatment that Mark gives to Jesus' march to Jerusalem followed by the passion account (8:31--15:47). Hence, Mark presents a balanced Christology: His miracle-working power and authority (the focus of 1:14--8:30) is set beside His suffering and death (8:31--15:47). The One identified as "the Son of God" in Mk 1:1 is the same One of whom the Roman centurion confesses, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" By this arrangement, Mark wants his readers to see not only that Jesus is "the Son of God," but that He is the *suffering* Son of God. In fact, He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's suffering servant who atones for the sins of others (Isa 53:5, 10). The way to the kingdom is through suffering and being a humble servant to others, and the Lord Jesus is the quintessential example of this (Mk 10:45)!

At the same time, Mark's gospel puts a heavy emphasis upon the demands of discipleship. The twelve are rebuked for their lack of understanding, the shallowness of their faith, and their hardness of heart (6:52; 7:18; 8:17-18; 16:11, 14). This was partly because Jesus did not exactly meet their expectations of what they thought Messiah would be and do, for they were expecting that He would come as a conquering king to establish and reign over His kingdom. Jesus, on the other hand, came more in the mold of a suffering servant. The disciples struggled to grasp and master the spiritual lessons Jesus sought to teach them about how His kingdom citizens were to live and the faith they were to have in Him as their Lord. Yet despite their sluggishness, the Lord Jesus never gave up on them but patiently worked with them and sought to develop them into faithful disciples who would be utterly committed to Him and His kingdom. The lessons on discipleship are many, culminating with Jesus' challenge in Mk 8:34, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Hence, we might say that the gospel of Mark has two main purposes: (1) to answer the question of "who is Jesus?" and (2) what is He calling His disciples to be and to do? Jesus is nothing less than the Lord of glory who has humbled Himself as a servant to suffer and die for the sins of mankind, and those who would be His disciples must make a total surrender to Him . . . even to the point of being willing to be martyred for His sake. Those who have learned these two great lessons can be said to have learned what it means to *Follow the Master!*

Appendix 2: Answers to the Unit Exams

Unit 1 Exam Answers

QUESTION 1:

C. Jesus is called God's "Son," because God the Father created Him before anything else.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

Baptism

QUESTION 4:

David

QUESTION 5

"A" and "D"

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7

C. Jesus first told the man that his sins were forgiven (implying that He had that authority).

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9

Daniel

QUESTION 10

Sabbath

QUESTION 11:

Tax collector

QUESTION 12

D. Jesus was ushering in a new era (the messianic kingdom) that would not merely "repair" but would replace the old Judaistic system of the Pharisees.

QUESTION 13

B. He spent the whole night in prayer.

QUESTION 14

Beelzebul

Question 16

D. Jesus derived His power from Satan.

QUESTION 16: False

QUESTION 17: True

QUESTION 18:

B. Although the movement started by Jesus and the 12 apostles begins small, it will continue growing until one day His kingdom will be worldwide with many disciples.

QUESTION 19: True

QUESTION 20: False

QUESTION 21: True

QUESTION 22:

C. When Jesus explained to the woman that it was her faith that made her well, Jesus intended for Jairus to hear this and do the same.

QUESTION 23:

D. He was a synagogue official

QUESTION 24

Peter

QUESTION 25: False. [Mk 6:5 says he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them].

Unit 2 Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: B. GALILEE AND PEREA.

QUESTION 3: False. [There were 12 baskets left over, one for each of the twelve disciples]

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5

D. This may be an allusion to Exodus 33 in which God passed by Moses to reveal His glory.

QUESTION 6

B. This referred to something that had been designated as a gift for God, but which became an excuse for using it for one's own self.

QUESTION 7

C. Jesus had a priority in His ministry of first offering the gospel of the kingdom to those of Israel, and that His miracles were primarily meant to testify to the Jews that He was the Messiah.

QUESTION 8

"A", "B" and "D."

QUESTION 9

"B" and "D"

QUESTION 10

Peter

QUESTION 11: False

QUESTION 12

B. That Jesus' disciples (who were already Christians) needed to make a total surrender of their will to Him.

QUESTION 13

C. The Christian who lacks total commitment and wants only to protect himself (being unwilling to suffer for the Lord's sake) may gain many earthly things in this life but will lose out in terms of eternal rewards for the future kingdom of God.

QUESTION 14

Moses and Elijah

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16

Servant

QUESTION 17:

C. They understand that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as "hyperbole," and that what He truly meant was for them to take decisive action to correct the problem or sin.

QUESTION 18: False

QUESTION 19:

B. Gen 2:24 which revealed that the man and woman were no longer two, but one flesh

QUESTION 20: True

QUESTION 21:

C. One must enter the kingdom by a simple child-like faith that is not complicated by pride and philosophical objections, but by humbly believing.

QUESTION 22: True

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24

A. They were indignant with James and John who wanted to be honored above the other disciples.

QUESTION 25: False

Unit 3 Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2

Prayer

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

D. Jesus meant that the privilege and responsibility for God's kingdom program would be given to the community of those who believed in Him as Messiah (that is, to the "church").

QUESTION 5

C. Ex 3:6 - "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7

Both "C" and "D" are correct.

QUESTION 8

D. The Antichrist (or his image) entering the temple.

QUESTION 9

B. Within the Trinity, it was the Father's role to determine the times and epochs of history, and since Jesus in His incarnation voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father (He did nothing on His own but was completely dependent upon the Father), this fact had simply not been revealed to Him.

QUESTION 10

After

QUESTION 11:

Money

QUESTION 12

A. The original Passover meal is described in Genesis 12:1-3.

QUESTION 13

Forgiveness of sins

QUESTION 14

C. Jesus said this while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

QUESTION 15

B. That the servant of the high priest cut off the ear of one of the disciples.

QUESTION 16: False

QUESTION 17: True

QUESTION 18: False

QUESTION 19: True

QUESTION 20: False

QUESTION 21:

D. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53

QUESTION 22:

C. The drink was meant to dull His senses to not feel the pain, but He chose to endure it fully.

QUESTION 23:

C. The Roman centurion who had stood right in front of the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

QUESTION 24

Veil

QUESTION 25: False

Appendix 3: Book Chart of the Gospel of Mark

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

<p>Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry</p> <p>1:1-13</p>		<p>Introductory Summary: Jesus' Message</p> <p>1:14 -15</p> <p>Jesus' Call of Four Fishermen</p> <p>1:16 -20</p> <p>Jesus' Authority over Demons and Disease</p> <p>1:21 -45</p> <p>Jesus' Controversies with Jewish Religious Leaders</p> <p>2:1- 3:6</p>	<p>Jesus' Galilean Ministry: Phase 1</p> <p><i>Miraculous Credentials but Ministry Challenged</i></p>	<p>Intro Summ: Withdrawal to the Sea of Galilee</p> <p>3:7- 12</p> <p>Jesus' Appointment of the Twelve</p> <p>3:13 -19</p> <p>The Beelzebul Accusation and Jesus' Identification of His True Family</p> <p>3:20 -35</p> <p>Jesus' Parables about the Kingdom of God</p> <p>4:1- 34</p> <p>Jesus' Miracles Demonstrate His Sovereign Power</p> <p>4:35- 6:1- 6a</p> <p>Conclusion: Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth</p>	<p>Jesus' Galilean Ministry: Phase 2</p> <p><i>Staunch Rejection by Religious Leaders and Home Town</i></p>	<p>Jesus' Galilean Ministry: Phase 3</p> <p><i>Compassion On the Needy While Developing the Twelve</i></p> <p>Various Events & Miracles (including the Feeding of 4000 and the 5000)</p> <p>Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Messiah</p> <p>8:27 -30</p> <p>6:14-8:26</p> <p>Sending Out of the Twelve into Galilee</p> <p>6:6b -13</p>	<p>Journey to Jerusalem to Suffer Death</p> <p><i>3 Predictions of His Coming Suffering With a Special Focus on the Demands of Discipleship</i></p> <p>1st Prediction of His Coming Suffering</p> <p>9:29 -10:31</p> <p>2nd Prediction of His Coming Suffering</p> <p>9:30- 10:31</p> <p>3rd Prediction of His Coming Suffering</p> <p>10:32 -52</p>	<p>Jesus' Ministry In and Around Jerusalem</p> <p>Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem</p> <p>11:1- 11</p> <p>Jesus' Prophetic Signs of Judgment Upon Israel</p> <p>11:12 -26</p> <p>Jesus' Controversy with Religious Leaders at Temple</p> <p>11:27- 12:44</p> <p>Jesus' Prophecy of Future: Olivet Discourse w/Disciples</p> <p>13:1- 37</p>	<p>Jesus' Sufferings and Death at Jerusalem</p> <p>Jesus' Betrayal, the Passover Meal, and His Desertion by the Disciples</p> <p>14:1- 52</p> <p>Jesus' Trials and Humiliation</p> <p>14:53- 15:20</p> <p>The Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Jesus</p> <p>15:21 -47</p>	<p>Jesus' Resurrection as the Living Lord</p> <p>16:1-20</p>	
				<p>8:31—10:52</p>		<p>11:1—13:37</p>		<p>14:1—15:47</p>		<p>16:1-20</p>	
				<p>6:6b—8:30</p>		<p>3:7—6:6a</p>		<p>3:7—6:6a</p>		<p>1:14—3:6</p>	

The Roman Centurion: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Mk 15:39

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mk 1:1