

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Study of the Gospel of Mark

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PREFACE

Thank you for purchasing this volume in the Understanding the New Testament series. I am grateful that you have chosen to spend your time studying God's word, and I am thankful that your support allows me to continue preaching and teaching the Scriptures. It is my hope that this material serves you well and strengthens both your understanding and your faith.

This series was designed with a simple goal: to help ordinary Christians read the New Testament more carefully and more confidently. These studies are not devotional guides, nor are they academic commentaries. They are careful readings of the biblical text itself. My aim is to let the inspired writers speak for themselves by paying attention to context, structure, argument flow, and key terms.

You do not need a seminary education to benefit from this study. I have tried to write in a way that is accessible to anyone who sincerely wants to understand Scripture more deeply, whether this is your first serious attempt at studying a New Testament book or you have been reading the Bible for many years. When original-language insights are necessary to clarify meaning, they are explained clearly and simply. No prior knowledge of Greek is assumed or needed.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible. However, I encourage you to compare different translations as you study. Seeing how different translations render a passage can sharpen understanding and highlight important nuances in the text.

My approach throughout this series is straightforward: context governs meaning. Each book of the New Testament was written to a real audience in a real historical setting. By paying attention to literary structure, historical background, and the author's stated purpose, we are better able to grasp what the Spirit intended to communicate. My goal is not to promote a system of theology, but to understand what the text says and allow it to shape our thinking.

How to Use This Book

To benefit most from this study, I recommend the following approach:

1. Read the biblical passage first.

Before consulting the commentary material, read the section of Scripture carefully. Try to understand its flow and argument on your own.

2. Read through the study material alongside the text.

Each section is arranged according to natural divisions in the biblical book. The heading at the top of each page identifies the passage under consideration. As you work through the comments, keep your Bible open and compare what is written here with the text itself.

3. Read the passage again.

After working through the notes, return to the Scripture and read it once more. Often clarity comes on the second or third reading, once structure and emphasis become more apparent.

4. Reflect and apply.

While this book focuses primarily on understanding the text, Scripture was not given merely for information but for transformation. Ask how the truths revealed in the passage affect your faith, conduct, and perspective.

This material is designed for individual study, but it can also serve as a helpful resource for small groups or Bible classes. The most important thing is that the text remains central. Let Scripture lead the study.

A Word of Encouragement

The New Testament was not written to scholars alone. It was written to congregations, families, and individual believers seeking to follow Christ faithfully. Careful reading is not reserved for professionals. It is the privilege of every Christian.

If you approach the text patiently, prayerfully, and honestly, you will grow in understanding. The Lord has revealed Himself in His word. Our task is to listen carefully.

A Prayer for the Reader

May God grant you wisdom as you study. May He open your mind to understand the Scriptures more clearly. May your confidence in His word deepen and your knowledge of His will grow. Finally, may the truths you discover shape your heart, strengthen your faith, and guide your life.

Amen.

A Brief Request

If you find this study helpful, I would be grateful if you would consider leaving a brief, honest review. Reviews help other readers discover these studies and allow this work of teaching to continue reaching those who are searching for a clearer understanding of Scripture.

To leave a review, browse to your recent purchases in your Amazon account and click on this book.

Thank you again for your interest in studying the New Testament carefully and faithfully.

~ 2 Timothy 2:15 ~

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

Author

- As early as ~100 A.D., this gospel was ascribed to (John) Mark, the cousin of Barnabas
- Many of the early church writers (like Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Origen) all affirm Mark as the author
- There is no real debate among scholars as to John Mark's authorship
- This gospel was widely circulated in the early church, and no argument against his authorship was ever made
- As a side note, as early as 125 AD, starting with Papias, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria, the gospel of Mark was thought to be the apostle Peter's gospel as interpreted by Mark
- This is something that modern scholars debate, but most of the early church writers took it to be true

Date

- According to (Catholic) church tradition, Mark died in Alexandria, Egypt in 64 AD
- Some place its writing towards the end of his life (55-63 AD), while others date it as early as 50-52 AD
- The date of writing tends to be seen through the lens of its link to Matthew (more in next section on that)
- I would opt for a later date rather than an earlier one (in the 55-60 AD range)

Connection to the Gospel of Matthew

- We can't talk about Mark without also mentioning Matthew
- The Gospel of Mark contains 661 verses, 600 of which are word-for-word included in Matthew
 - That's almost 91% of Mark that is also in Matthew
- It's very clear that one of these men used the other's work as a reference
- It was originally thought that Mark used Matthew and just stripped out all the "Jewish stuff", as he wrote to a Roman audience and they wouldn't know what it all meant
- More recently, scholars think that Matthew used Mark as a foundation and then added all the "Jewish stuff" to it
- I don't think it really matters which came first, as God has given us the Bible He wants us to have
- Having said that, in my opinion, Matthew was the first gospel written
- With the Jews being God's people and the Gentiles not being introduced into the Church until Acts 10, it would be necessary for a gospel account written to the Jews long before one was necessary for Gentiles and Romans (Mark's primary audience)
- Many of the early church writers named Matthew's gospel as the first written; this wasn't challenged until 1838

Message and Purpose

- It is fairly clear from the book that it was written to Gentiles
 - Jewish customs are explained (Mark 7:3-4)
 - Aramaic is translated into Greek (Mark 3:17, 5:41)
 - Roman use of time is used (Mark 6:48)
- Mark quotes from the OT the least of all the gospels
- Interestingly, he also emphasizes Jesus's actions (miracles) more than His parables
 - 19 miracles compared to 4 parables
- Emphasizes Jesus's servanthood (Mark 10:45) throughout
 - A good theme would be "Jesus, Servant of God"

CHAPTER 1

Jesus is the Messiah (Mark 1:1-3)

- Mark starts with the proclamation “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”
 - Establishes immediately that this is “good news”
 - Jesus is the Son of God
- Quotes Malachi 3:1 at the end of vs. 2
- Quotes Isaiah 40:3 in vs. 3
- Why just mention Isaiah in vs. 2?
 - The essential part of his quotation is what is in verse 3, hence he says the passage is from Isaiah
- Mark quotes these verses to show two things
 - The Messiah is coming; and
 - The one that goes before Him to prepare the way is John the Baptizer

John the Baptizer (Mark 1:4-8)

- Mark then sets up John's role in the gospel
- He appeared in the wilderness and preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin
 - Sin is immediately identified as the problem separating God and man
- Many were going out to see him, including some of the religious leaders
- Mark specifically describes what he wore and ate
 - Wore camel's hair garments and a leather belt
 - Ate wild locusts and honey
- Harkens back to the description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8
 - Ahaziah immediately knew of whom his men spoke based on the description they gave him
- In Malachi 4:5-6, God said He would send Elijah before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes
- This is him!
- So, here comes the great and awesome day of the Lord
- Mark also specifically mentions that John preached that another is coming that is mightier than he is, and he isn't fit to touch his sandals
 - The sandals and feet were unclean in Jewish culture
 - Pointing your feet at someone in the Middle East is still considered an insult
- John also says he baptizes with water, but Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit
 - Isaiah 32:12-18
 - Describes the sinfulness of the people for 700 years, and their destruction until the Spirit is poured out on them
 - Isaiah 44:1-5
 - Same picture as seen in Isaiah 32, but this one is more hopeful
- John's message is that one greater than him will come and bring the restoration of blessings to God's people that He promised

Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11)

- Once John is established as the promised Elijah and the one who will proclaim the way for the Messiah, Jesus arrives to be baptized by John
 - Note in verse 10 that Jesus came “up out of the water”
 - Baptism REQUIRES complete immersion in water
- As soon as He comes up out of the water, the Heavens are torn or split open and the Holy Spirit descends on Him like a dove
 - The “torn open” part is starkly different than how the other gospels tell it
 - Same Greek word that is used in Mark 15:38 to describe the tearing of the curtain in the Temple
- Again, this seems to be a reference to Isaiah
 - Isaiah 64:1-3
- The Spirit coming down on Jesus is also a reference to Isaiah
 - Isaiah 11:1-4
- Finally, we have the voice of God Himself calling Jesus His Son and that He is pleased with Jesus
 - Psalm 2:6-7
 - Isaiah 42:1
- All of this is done to say that Jesus is the Messiah, and it can’t be debated from a Scriptural standpoint

Temptation of Jesus (Mark 1:12-13)

- Immediately after His baptism, Jesus is taken by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He is tempted by Satan for 40 days
 - Not a random number
 - Israel wanders the desert for 40 yrs (Deuteronomy 8:2)
 - Moses on Sinai for 40 days (Exodus 34:28)
 - Elijah led to Horeb for 40 days (1 Kings 19:8)
 - Furthermore, Jesus isn't just tempted for 40 days
 - Specifically mentions that Satan did the tempting
 - Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention Satan as doing the tempting
 - John doesn't include this narrative in his gospel
 - This tempting that happens is a battle between the ruler of the kingdom of Heaven and the ruler of the kingdom of the world
 - Jesus wins! He doesn't sin
- Mark alone also mentions that Jesus was with the wild animals
 - Why does he include this detail?
 - There's nothing safe about being among wild animals, yet Jesus is
 - Isaiah 43:16-21
- Finally, Mark mentions that the angels ministered to Him during this time
- Shows that Jesus was sinless throughout the 40 day ordeal
- God the Father was always with Him as well

The Beginning of Jesus's Ministry (Mark 1:14-15)

- Mark mentions that John (the Baptizer) is taken into custody and Jesus heads into Galilee
 - John's job as the forerunner to the Christ is over
 - Jesus, the Messiah, is here now, so John must fade away
- Jesus takes up preaching the gospel
 - The time is now
 - Fullness of time (Galatians 4:4)
 - Coming of a new kingdom (Amos 9)
 - The kingdom of God is at hand
 - "At hand" is a Greek word referencing spatial distance, not temporal distance
 - For example: I have paper at hand. It's on the table next to me.
 - Now that Jesus (the King) has arrived, His kingdom is close by
 - Repent and believe in the good news
 - Not the Church, but rather salvation through Christ
 - The King and His kingdom are here
 - This isn't a request for you to accept Jesus as king but a proclamation that He is the King
 - This is a demand for submission and obedience to God

Calling Some Apostles (Mark 1:16-20)

- Mark now records Jesus calling Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, and John
 - They were fishermen engaged in a fishing business
 - Vs. 20 shows that James and John's father, Zebedee, hired others to work for him in their business
 - This is how they earned their money to take care of their families
 - Probably the biggest lesson for us in Jesus's call is that of commitment
 - They left everything in their lives to follow Jesus
 - They left family and career for Him
 - They didn't just squeeze Him into the cracks of their lives or give Him the "leftovers" of their day

Teaching on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-28)

- Jesus immediately heads into Capernaum and teaches in the synagogue on the next Sabbath
- The people are amazed because He's teaching with authority
 - It was common for scribes to teach from the Scriptures but essentially "hedge their bets" on whether what they were teaching was correct
 - Jesus doesn't do that but instead is saying, "Here's what this means..."
- He seems to be interrupted in His teaching by a man possessed by a demon
- The demon says, "Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are!"
- Jesus tells the demon to be quiet and come out of him
- The demon does it!
- Jesus has not only demonstrated His authority in teaching from the Scriptures, but also in His ability to cast out unclean spirits
- The people notice and comment on this!
- Stories of Jesus are told everywhere around that region of Galilee

Healing Peter's Mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-34)

- He left the synagogue and goes to Simon and Andrew's house
- Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law
 - She goes from having a near-death fever to having strength to serve in a matter of moments
- Once word has spread about Jesus, the crowds bring Him their sick and demon-possessed
- He heals as many as He can
- This all shows His authority over the body and healing it, as well as His authority in teaching

Jesus Leaves Capernaum (Mark 1:35-39)

- The next day, Jesus gets up early (it's still dark) and goes out to pray
- The apostles finally find Him and say, "Everyone's looking for you."
- He says, "It's time to go."
- Goes about the area preaching and casting out demons
- What should strike you here is that Jesus prays and then realizes that His mission isn't in Capernaum anymore, but in going around Galilee and preaching
- This clearly shows us the importance of prayer
 - Jesus is in communication with the Father and realizes He needs to change up what He's doing
 - Doesn't stay where people are looking for Him but takes the message out to others

Healing a Man with Leprosy (Mark 1:40-45)

- While out preaching, a man with leprosy asks Jesus to heal him, if He's willing
- Jesus is and does, but tells the man not to go around saying what happened
- The man completely ignores Jesus and does it anyway
- People swarm Jesus in the cities and He has to stay in the wilderness, where they'd come find Him
- Leprosy was essentially a death sentence back then
 - No medicine for it
 - Very rarely did the bacteria that causes leprosy die off on its own
 - A leper was unclean, had to live apart from everyone, identify himself as unclean, and wear torn clothes
 - Only a priest could declare you clean of leprosy (or unclean, too)
- So, this leper is incredibly bold in coming up to Jesus and asking for healing
- He has faith, though!
 - Not "If you can, please heal me"
 - Instead, "If you want to, you can heal me"
- Just as bold as the leper, Jesus touches the man to heal him
 - We know that Jesus didn't have to touch the man to cleanse his leprosy
 - This was a compassionate touch by Jesus
 - Probably the first time the man had been touched by another person in a very long time
- Jesus touching him also shows that He has the power of clean and unclean
 - Jesus grants cleansing with the touch
 - The man doesn't "transfer" his uncleanness to Jesus as the Law would indicate (Leviticus 5:3)
 - Jesus "transfers" His cleanness to the man
- One last thing to mention about this
 - This shows very elegantly that Jesus not only has the authority to heal (as seen in the last few verses), but He also has the desire to heal
 - God wants us to be cleaned of our sins through Christ's blood, and Jesus shows that here in His willingness to heal this outcast of what caused him to be separated from society

CHAPTER 2

Jesus Heals the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-13)

- Jesus goes back to Capernaum; when the people realize He's there, they mob Him
 - This is almost certainly Peter and Andrew's house
- Due to the crowd, a paralyzed man's friends break through the roof to lower the man down in front of Jesus
- Jesus sees the friends' faith and tells the man, "Your sins are forgiven"
- In chapter 1, we saw Jesus had the authority to heal the body, and the willingness to heal the body
- This shows He has authority and willingness to forgive sins as well
- Why not heal the man like the friends wanted?
 - I personally believe Jesus always intended to heal the man
 - Jesus has already healed so many people, there's no reason He wouldn't heal this man as well, especially after his friends demonstrate the faith that He constantly commends
- He says this first, knowing the scribes in front of Him would think it blasphemy
 - In other words, Jesus uses this as a teaching moment for His audience to show that He can both forgive sins and heal people
- Notice that the scribes logic is exactly correct – "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
 - Only God can forgive sins, but Jesus is God!
- This is exactly what Jesus wants the people to understand
- Jesus answers their internal question by asking one of His own – "Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven?' or to say, 'Rise up and walk.'"
 - Easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven" because there's no external sign that it's been done
 - So, Jesus says, "Rise up and walk" so they know He can forgive sins as well
- Jesus calls Himself the "Son of Man" in verse 10
 - Reference to Daniel 7:13-14
 - Commonly taken by Jews in that day to indicate the coming Messiah
- By saying this, Jesus is claiming that He is the Messiah they've been waiting for
- Everyone is understandably amazed at the paralytic man jumping up and walking
 - The crowd would have known the paralytic man and knew the healing wasn't fake
 - Also worth noting is that he's instantly healed – no stretching necessary, no weakness shown; he just gets up, grabs his pallet, and goes home
- After performing this miracle, Jesus goes back to the seashore to teach the people

Calling Matthew (Mark 2:14-17)

- Jesus sees Levi (Matthew) sitting in the tax collection booth and tells Matthew to follow Him
- Just like with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Matthew drops everything and follows
- Jesus calling Matthew as an apostle is significant because Matthew is a tax collector
 - Tax collectors in Israel were little better than Gentiles
 - Universally hated because they worked for “the enemy” (Rome) and typically would charge a hefty fee on top of what the Roman tax was, and the tax collector kept that money
 - Many Jews considered tax collectors to make things unclean if they entered your house, touched anything, etc.
 - This wasn’t the Law, but most went with it anyway
- This is the man who Jesus called as an apostle
- Everyone who was there must have been aghast
- But Jesus goes over to his house for dinner
- Matthew invites people to come eat with Jesus, but he only knows other disreputable people
 - Other tax collectors and “sinners”
 - Probably prostitutes, thieves, etc.
- While there, the Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus’s disciples why He’s eating with this sinful bunch
- Jesus answers, “It’s not the healthy that need a physician, but the sick”
- “I didn’t come to call the righteous but the sinners”
- Essentially, Jesus is saying, “I’m here because these are the people that need the help I can provide”
- It’s worth mentioning that by asking the question the way they did, the Pharisees and scribes don’t think they are sinners
 - They don’t think they need forgiveness of any sins
- Jesus goes to people who acknowledge that they’re sinful because they’re more likely to receive Him and want His help
- By calling Levi as an apostle, Jesus lets everyone know that He is not only accepting of sinners, but desirous of the sinful to come to Him so He can heal them

A Question of Fasting (Mark 2:18-22)

- The last part of chapter 2 contains two separate attacks on Jesus regarding the Old Law and His interaction with it
- First, John (the Baptizer's) disciples come to Him and ask why His disciples aren't fasting when they and the Pharisees are fasting
- Jesus tells them that the bridegroom (Himself) is with them, and so now isn't the time for fasting
- There will come a day (when He's killed) that they will fast, but not now
- He gives them two different illustrations
 - Putting a new patch on an old garment
 - Putting new wine in old wineskins
- There's no explanation for these illustrations, but they are expressing the same thing as the wedding feast example
 - In all 3 instances, what Jesus is telling them is that you don't mix the new with the old
 - His appearance is the herald of the New Covenant, which will officially start when He dies on the cross
 - Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-18 that He didn't come to abolish the Law but to complete it
 - Hebrews 10:1 tells us that the Old Covenant was a shadow of the good things to come
 - So, Jesus isn't adding onto the Old Law but starting something brand new

A Question of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-18)

- The second attack comes by the Pharisees
- Jesus's disciples are going through the fields and plucking heads of wheat to eat
- Jewish custom stated that reaping was not allowed on the Sabbath (the Law doesn't say reaping isn't allowed, though)
- So, strictly speaking, there's no violation of the Law here
- Jesus doesn't take that tack in His defense, though
- He talks about David eating the show bread (found in 1 Samuel 21:1-6)
- This action by David was unlawful because the show bread is specifically for the priests to eat as they fulfill their duties
- So why does Jesus mention it?
- Jesus is making an argument based on His authority as God's Son
 - Jesus draws a parallel between David's authority and actions, unlawful though they were, and Jesus's authority and His disciples actions, which are not unlawful
- David, as God's anointed King (though not king yet) had the authority to eat the showbread and give it to his companions
- Jesus, as God's anointed King and Son has the authority to allow His companions to harvest grain and eat it

CHAPTER 3

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)

- Chapter 3 picks up where chapter 2 left off
 - Jesus is attacked for "doing work" on the Sabbath
- He goes to a synagogue and heals a man with a withered hand
- The people are waiting to accuse Jesus of healing the man
- They weren't interested that the man would be healed, but instead that Jesus would break the Sabbath
- That's essentially the question He asks them as well – "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or not?"
- They don't answer because they know that what they're saying doesn't make sense
- Jesus is doing nothing but speaking to heal the man!
- Their silence angers Jesus, and it grieved Him that they were so hard-hearted that they couldn't even allow the healing He does (through speaking) on the Sabbath
- The people are blind to the fact of who Jesus is, despite all the miracles and His even claiming to be the Messiah
- This is exactly who the Jewish people have been waiting to come for thousands of years, and they can't set aside their own misconceptions, and instead they are going to kill Him

The Crowds Follow Jesus (Mark 3:7-12)

- While the religious leaders plot to kill Him, the masses of people can't get close enough to Him
- People come from all over (even Gentile areas) to see the man who is healing people
 - Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, Tyre and Sidon
- The crowds are so thick that Jesus has the disciples prepare a boat for Him so they can't press in on Him so much
- They all think if they touch Him, they can be healed (and we know that's possible – Luke 8:43-48, Mark 5:25-34)
- He also ordered the unclean spirits not to say who He was
 - Again, this shows that He possesses authority over these unclean spirits

Choosing the Apostles (Mark 3:13-19)

- He calls the disciples to Him on the mountain and picks the twelve apostles
- Jesus goes up the mountain like Moses did
 - For Moses, it was the beginning of the Old Covenant and God's people
 - With Jesus, we have a new nation and new people assigned on the mountain
- Mark lists the apostles: Simon (Peter), James the son of Zebedee, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus (usually called James the Less), Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot
 - The New Testament records the choosing of the 12 apostles in Matthew 10:2-4, here in Mark 3:13-19, and Luke 6:14-16
 - Luke lists them again in Acts 1:13 (without Judas Iscariot) after Jesus's ascension
 - In all four lists, Peter is always listed first, and Peter, Andrew, James, and John are the first 4 listed (the order here does vary)

Accusations Against Jesus (Mark 3:20-30)

- When He returns to Capernaum, the crowds are crushing against Him to the point He can't even eat a meal
- We have two sets of people who call Him insane
- Verse 21 mentions "His own people"
 - This is His family, which we'll address more at the end of the chapter
- The religious leaders all call Him insane
 - "He casts out demons by the name of Beelzebul"
 - Another name for Satan
- He calls the religious leaders to Him and says, "Why would Satan cast out Satan? A house divided on itself will fall."
 - The leaders' logic is utterly ridiculous
 - He also points out that the stronger person wins the fight – if Satan isn't casting out Satan, then someone stronger (God) is doing it
- Then we get one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible
 - Vs. 29 – "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"
- What does this mean?
 - Vs. 30 explains – They are attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to a demon
 - Why is this unforgiveable?
 - If you aren't willing to recognize Jesus's power and authority, then you will never submit to His rule
 - With such an attitude, you will never repent because you're blinded to the truth that Jesus is the only way (John 14:6)
 - God says if you ask for forgiveness, He'll forgive you; people who think the Holy Spirit is evil will never ask for that forgiveness
 - So, the sin is unforgiveable, not in God's ability to forgive, but that forgiveness will never be asked for from the person doing this

Jesus's Family Comes to Take Him Home (Mark 3:31-35)

- Now we get to Jesus's family, who have come to take Him home because they think He's crazy
- Jesus's mother and brothers come down, and they ask Him to come with them
- Jesus says, "Who are my mother and brothers?" He points to those listening and says, "These are my mother and brothers, for whoever does God's will is my kin."
 - This is most likely His whole family, including His sisters, as He mentions sisters in vs. 35, along with His mother and brothers
 - Family loyalty was (and still is) highly prized in the Middle East, so that He would deny His own flesh and blood and call a bunch of strangers family instead would have been shocking to His audience
 - Of course, Jesus isn't rejecting His family, but letting His audience know that He's establishing something different now
 - In the new nation of God, blood relation doesn't link us, but God's Spirit does

CHAPTER 4

The Parable of the Lamp (Mark 4:21-25)

- Jesus uses 3 parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom in the next section of Mark 4
- The first of these is the parable of the lamp
 - This parable is very similar to an example that Jesus uses in Matthew 5:14-16 in speaking about his disciples and how they shouldn't hide themselves from the world
- While Jesus uses similar imagery in both, the message in each isn't the same
 - In Matthew, He's telling His disciples that they shouldn't hide their faith from the world – they're the lights in the dark
- Here in Mark 4, Jesus is speaking specifically of the kingdom and that it is meant to be revealed, not hidden
 - A lamp is not placed under a basket
 - Truth is meant to shine
 - Furthermore, God's revelation must be received and shared
- He ends with the words, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."
 - This is a fairly common phrase Jesus uses to key His audience into the fact that he's told a parable, and there's a deeper meaning to His words
- Jesus follows this up by giving a warning, and He starts out with, "Take care who you listen to."
 - He's just told them a parable and said, "He who has ears, let him hear."
 - The only other option as to who the people could listen to is the religious leaders of the day – the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, etc.
 - While Jesus hasn't called out these leaders yet in Mark like He did towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we learned in Mark chapter 3 that they were plotting to kill Him
- He tells His audience that the standard of measure they use will be amplified in return, but there is clearly a spiritual tone to what He says
 - If they listen to the correct person (Him and His teachings), then they will receive more understanding
 - However, if they listen to the religious leaders and what they teach, then even what understanding they have of God's kingdom will be removed from them
 - God isn't going somehow supernaturally remove that understanding, but if they listen to the religious leaders, then they will be led astray by them, and they'll lose what little understanding they have because it will be replaced by falsehoods regarding the coming Kingdom
- This warning relates to the Jewish understanding of the Messiah and the kingdom He would create
 - For nearly 1000 years, Jewish thought was that the Messiah would return and bring back a paradise to Israel that hadn't been seen since Solomon's days
 - All their enemies would be defeated

- There would be economic, social, political, and militaristic superiority
- One of the main reasons the religious leaders stood up against Jesus being the Messiah is that He didn't fit their narrative on who the Messiah should be
- If people went with the predominant teachings about the Messiah, they would miss Him, because that's not what God intended Jesus to be

The Parable of the Seed (Mark 4:26-29)

- The second parable Jesus tells about the kingdom of God is that of the seed
 - The seed here is the Word of God
 - The soil, like in the parable of the sower, is the hearts of mankind
 - The sower is the one preaching the gospel
- As far as we know, the kingdom grows mysteriously
 - We sow the seed, but God is the one that gives the increase
 - Human effort alone can't explain spiritual growth
 - It requires the movement of the Holy Spirit on each individual
- Patience and faith are required to allow time for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to convict people regarding their need for Jesus
 - The plan of salvation is
 1. Hearing the gospel message
 2. Believing the gospel message
 3. Repenting of your sins
 4. Confessing Jesus as the Christ
 5. Submitting to the waters of baptism
- We, as Christians, are part of the first and last steps
 - We preach the gospel; and
 - We baptize others
- The steps in-between are accomplished by the hearer of the gospel and the Holy Spirit
 - That's what we see here in this parable as well
 - The man sows the seed and then he reaps at the right time

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-34)

- In the third parable, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed that is sown on the soil
 - The mustard seed was one of the smallest seeds they knew of in that part of the world
 - However, once a mustard seed grows it can rival full sized trees
 - Black mustard, which they had in the Middle East back then, can grow to be 12 feet tall
 - That is clearly a huge plant compared to the seed that is sown
- In relation to how the mustard seed is like the Kingdom of God, we see in the New Testament that small beginnings produce great results
 - We know that the Church started with 12 apostles and possibly several hundred (at most) other people that followed Jesus when He was crucified
 - Even within the book of Acts, the Church has grown to encompass the Eastern half of the Roman Empire, spanning from Rome itself all the way through Israel and Egypt
 - Now, there are millions of faithful people around the entire world
- We can also learn from this parable that God's power works through what seems to us as insignificant
- The growth of God's kingdom happens through divine means, not human means

Calming the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)

- After teaching that day, Jesus tells the apostles He wants to go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee
- As they cross, a storm brews with fierce wind, which causes waves to start swamping the boat
- Jesus sleeps on a cushion in the back of the boat underneath a small ledge or shelf at the rear of the boat
 - This area was used for storing supplies or, as Jesus is doing, sleeping
- The disciples panic: 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'
 - Notice that they didn't wake Him up to ask Him to do anything except worry with them because they didn't think there was anything He could do
- Jesus rebukes the wind and seas – 'Peace, be still'
 - Instant calm
 - Creation obeys the Creator
 - This miracle demonstrates His divine power and identity
- Jesus asks, 'Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?'
 - They were afraid that He had the power to even control nature itself
 - Despite their having witnessed countless healings, the casting out of demons, and other miracles, this one really challenges their conception of who Jesus really is and what He can do
- We can't miss the connection here between this demonstration of Jesus's power as the Son of God and His parables on what the Kingdom of God is just prior
 - This is the King exercising the power God has given Him
 - They expected a physical kingdom where peace reigns around them because of His presence
 - They get that physical peace here because of His presence
 - However, He is so much more than that

CHAPTER 5

Curing the Demon-Possessed Man (Mark 5:1-13)

- Mark 5 opens immediately after Jesus calms the storm
- He and the disciples arrive in the country of the Gerasenes
 - A Gentile region located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee signified by the presence of pigs, an unclean animal for the Jews
- A man possessed by a 'legion' of demons meets Jesus as soon as He steps out of the boat
- No human could restrain him, not even with chains
 - The villagers seemed to be happy allowing him to remain among the tombs – a sort of "you stay in your area and we'll stay in ours" arrangement
- His condition shows complete spiritual bondage
 - Super-human strength, screaming constantly, cutting himself with stones
- The demons immediately recognize Jesus's authority
- Jesus tells them to come out of the man
- The demons beg for permission to enter a herd of pigs instead
- Jesus permits it, proving His authority even in “enemy” territory
- The herd of pigs then rushes into the sea
 - This gives us a dramatic picture of destructive evil loosed
- This event demonstrates that Jesus not only confronts evil but removes it entirely, restoring peace to the man and the region

The People's Reaction to Jesus's Miracle (Mark 5:14-17)

- The herdsmen run to the town and tell the people what happened
- They come out to Jesus and see the man in his right mind and clothed, sitting there at Jesus's feet
- The townspeople are afraid
 - They have a different response to their fear than the disciples did
 - The disciples were in awe over who Jesus was when He calmed the storm
 - Instead of rejoicing over this healed man who had tormented them, the townspeople beg Jesus to leave
 - Fear and economic loss outweigh faith and gratitude
 - They prefer the familiar presence of evil to the disruptive holiness of Christ
- Discipleship sometimes means losing comfort for the sake of spiritual freedom

The Man Wants to Join Jesus (Mark 5:18-20)

- The formerly possessed man wants to follow Jesus
- Jesus sends him home, instead, but tells him to spread the news about what happened to him and how Jehovah God had blessed him
- He becomes the first Gentile missionary, declaring the mercy of Christ in the Decapolis
 - If the people won't allow Jesus to teach there, then He instead chooses to send this man to do it for Him
 - We'll see Jesus return to the Decapolis region in both Mark 7 and 8, and the reception He receives is much warmer and more in line with what we see everywhere else He travels

A Healing and a Resurrection (Mark 5:21-43)

- The people asked Jesus to leave, and He does
 - He doesn't impose Himself on anyone that doesn't want Him – physically (as here) or spiritually
- Jesus returns to the Jewish side of the lake, where faith looks different
- Crowds press upon Him – eager, yet also superficial
 - Most of them aren't interested in His teaching; only His healing powers
- Among them are two desperate figures full of faith
 - Jairus, a synagogue ruler
 - An unnamed woman suffering for twelve years with a hemorrhage
- Jairus begs for Jesus to come and heal his daughter
- He agrees, but is interrupted as we first see the woman's faith
- The woman's condition made her ceremonially unclean
 - Much like the leper from Mark 1, she would have been excluded and unseen from normal Jewish life because of her bleeding condition
- Her faith is expressed in quiet determination
 - 'If I just touch His garments, I will get well.'
- She touches Him and is immediately healed, despite Jesus's not actively participating in the healing
- He asks, "Who touched me?"
- The disciples: "Everyone!!"
- She is brave enough to come forward, despite her fear
 - Her response despite the fear is a stark contrast to the disciples at the end of Mark 4 and the Gerasenes earlier in this chapter
- Jesus calls her out publicly
 - Not to shame her, but to restore her identity and proclaim her faith before all
 - Jesus doesn't "take back" the healing, but tells her to go in peace and be healed
- As Jesus stops to help the woman, Jairus receives devastating news – his daughter is dead
 - This pause tests his faith: Will Jairus still trust when hope seems gone?
- Jesus's words are key: 'Do not be afraid, only believe.'
 - God often uses delays like this as opportunities for us to deepen our trust in Him
- Jesus enters Jairus's house where mourning fills the air
- He asks why they're making so much commotion when the child is only asleep, not dead

- They laugh at Him – they know when someone's dead or just asleep
- He dismisses the commotion and takes only a few disciples and the parents to the child's room
- His words, 'Talitha, kum,' are intimate and tender
 - 'Talitha' means "little girl" or "little child", but some scholars argue that it can also be translated as "little lamb" – a term of endearment for a young child
- This is the only resurrection Christ performs in Mark
 - Adds to His growing body of things He has authority over

From Fear to Faith (End of Mark 4 through Mark 5)

- Throughout the end of Mark 4 and all of Mark 5, fear and faith stand in tension
 - The disciples are afraid, but their understanding of Jesus as the Son of God is deepened even more because of their faith
 - The townspeople fear Jesus, but they reject Him because their fear overcomes their faith
 - The hemorrhaging woman is afraid because she touched the Messiah without permission, but she steps forward when Jesus asks who touched Him and is commended for her faith
 - Jairus is afraid because his daughter has died, but his belief is rewarded through her resurrection
- One of this sections biggest lessons for us to learn is that faith isn't measured by perfection, but by persistence – a willingness to trust God even when we're afraid

CHAPTER 6

A Return to Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6)

- Jesus heads back to Nazareth, His home town
- Teaches in the synagogue, but the townspeople take offense
 - They see the carpenter, not the Christ
 - Familiarity blinds them to faith
- Even Jesus marvels at their unbelief
- Shows us that miracles alone cannot create faith
 - We always like to think, “If I’d seen all the healings and wonders that He performed, I’d have believed”
 - Not necessarily true
- Spiritual hardness of heart often hides beneath the ordinary
 - The text notes that Jesus 'could do no miracle there except heal a few'
 - This isn't a limitation on His power, but reflects the nature of God's work in the lives of faithful people
 - He acts where hearts are open
- Our unbelief shuts the door to divine blessings
 - Faith is almost always the avenue through which God's power becomes personal

Sending Out the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13)

- Jesus sends the twelve out in pairs
- Gives them the authority over unclean spirits
- Tells them to travel light
 - They are to take no bread, no bag, and no money
 - They'll be completely dependent on God's provision
- Their mission foreshadows the Church's task
 - Preaching the word of God and trusting Him completely
- Rejection is to be expected, but obedience is the focus
- They had the power to heal people as well as cast out demons

John the Baptizer's Fate (Mark 6:14-29)

- Mark pauses his gospel account here to recount John's martyrdom under Herod
- Herod respected John, yet he imprisoned him to please others
 - Most specifically his brother's wife, Herodias, who was now with Herod
- Mark says that Herod enjoyed listening to John and acknowledged he was a righteous man
- Herodias, on the other hand, wanted John killed
- On his birthday, Herod throws a lavish banquet that was a who's-who of Jewish political and military elite
- Herodias's daughter dances for the king and his guests
 - This probably would have been more striptease with very little tease than what we'd think of as dancing today
- Herod was happy and drunk and offers her up to half his kingdom
- She goes out and asks mom what she should ask for, and Herodias tells her to ask for John's head on a platter
- She does, and to save face in front of all his guests, Herod has John killed and his head brought to her
 - Rejecting truth for popularity is what happens when our pride gets in the way
- When John's followers here he's been killed, they retrieve his body and bury him

The Apostles Return for a Brief Respite (Mark 6:30-34)

- The apostles come back from their preaching the kingdom earlier in the gospel and report to Jesus how things went
- Jesus takes them to the boat to go to a quieter place, as the crowds were constantly milling about
 - So busy that the disciples didn't even have time to eat
- The crowds follow them, and in fact beat them across the lake
 - Instead of frustration, Jesus feels compassion
- He sees them as 'sheep without a shepherd'
- He begins to teach them as if he wasn't trying to get the disciples away from them for a time

Feeding the Five Thousand (Mark 6:35-44)

- This is the only miracle that appears in all four Gospels
 - A major moment in Jesus's ministry
- Jesus started teaching them and went into the night – “it was already late”
- It's well passed dinnertime and they're in the middle of nowhere, so the disciples tell Jesus to send them away to buy food for themselves
- Jesus tells them to give the people something to eat
 - He knows they don't have enough food to feed the crowd
 - This is a test for the disciples, and they fail it spectacularly
- They say we aren't going to spend 200 denarii for food for them all!
 - Where the disciples see impossibility, Jesus sees opportunity
- Jesus asks what they have available, and they say they have 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
- He uses what little they have and multiplies it beyond need
- He blesses the food as He looked up toward Heaven
 - He is acknowledging God as the giver of this abundance
- Everyone eats and is satisfied
 - An echo of Psalm 23
 - Jesus provides physical and spiritual nourishment for His people
- The abundance (with twelve baskets of left overs) represents His sufficiency for all
 - He is more than enough for everyone who seeks Him out
- There were 5,000 men who ate
 - Total amount of people, including women and children, was probably between 10,000 and 20,000 people

Jesus Walks on Water (Mark 6:45-52)

- After the miracle, Jesus sends the disciples ahead while He dismissed the crowd and went up on the mountain to pray
- They struggle against the wind, and He comes to them walking on the sea in the fourth watch of the night
 - Roman watches lasted for 3 hours
 - There were 4 watches between 6 P.M. when the night started and 6 A.M. when day dawned
 - The 4th watch would have been between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M.
- Verse 48 tells us that He was intending to walk by them and not help them out as they were struggling against the wind and waves
- They saw Him, though, and they were terrified because they thought He was a ghost
 - Remember, this is a very storm-tossed sea with big waves
 - If He's walking on the water, the waves are going up and down, and so is Jesus and their boat
 - He's probably appearing and disappearing based on if He or their boat is in a trough between waves
- They're terrified, but His words calm them: 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid'
- He gets in the boat with them and as soon as He does, the wind stops and the storm dissipates
- Mark notes that the disciples 'had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves'
 - Their hearts were hardened
 - Not rebellious, but dull to divine meaning
 - They saw the miracles, but missed the message
 - Faith must grow beyond amazement and into understanding

Healings in Gennesaret (Mark 6:53-56)

- As soon as they land back on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, the people recognize Him
- Wherever Jesus goes, people bring the sick to touch His garment
- What Nazareth rejected in Mark 3, others receive with eagerness
- One lesson we can learn here is that those who reach for Jesus always find enough grace

CHAPTER 7

Following Traditions (Mark 7:1-13)

- In Mark 7, Mark continues the theme of misunderstanding Jesus's mission
- The focus shifts, though, from external opposition to internal corruption
 - From storms and casting out demons to hearts and traditions
- In this section of Mark, the Pharisees and scribes confront Jesus over ritual handwashing
 - Their concern isn't hygiene, but ceremonial purity
 - Measuring holiness by human rules
- Jesus exposes their hypocrisy by quoting Isaiah 29:13: they honor God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him
 - Religious actions without the right attitude in the heart leads to empty, useless worship
- They elevated their own tradition above God's word
 - Nullified divine commands in the Law to protect their human systems
- True obedience flows from love, not regulation
 - When traditions replace faith, we drift from God while thinking we serve Him
- The 'Corban' example shows how tradition justified disobedience
 - People claimed resources were 'dedicated to God' to avoid helping their parents
 - Jesus reveals the deeper issue: sin hides behind religious excuses
 - His point is that they were blatantly disregarding the commandment of honoring your parents with a man-created tradition of dedicating money to God
- It's important to say, though, that tradition itself isn't a sin
 - Jesus's warning is against legalism and hypocrisy
 - Disciples who belong to Jesus uphold God's rules, not their own

More about the Heart (Mark 7:14-23)

- Jesus turns the purity debate upside down
- He declares that defilement comes from within the body, not from what enters the body
- This teaching reorients the entire Old Covenant understanding because the Old Covenant required washings and other purity rituals to cleanse the body
 - It also presents the way in which God will include Gentiles into the New Covenant
 - The outside doesn't matter – it's the inside of the man that counts
- True uncleanness is moral, not ceremonial
- Jesus lists the evils that come from within: envy, pride, deceit, immorality, and more
- These are not external contaminants, but expressions of inner corruption
- The gospel begins where the problem begins – inside the heart – and spreads outward to the rest of the body and the mind
 - Romans 12:2
 - Philippians 2:5-8

Two Healing Miracles (Mark 7:24-37)

- Leaving Galilee, Jesus enters Gentile territory – Tyre and Sidon
- He tried to hide himself, but He couldn't escape notice
- A Gentile woman begs for her daughter's healing from a demon, asking a number of times
- Jesus tests her faith
 - “You feed the children, not the dogs.”
- Her humble response
 - “Yes, but even the dogs get crumbs – I'll take those.”
- Like the man on the pallet that was lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1-13), I believe Jesus always intended to help this woman's daughter
- Jesus's response
 - “Because of this answer – because you have faith – your daughter is healed”
- Her humility is rewarded, even though she's a Gentile, where many Jews didn't receive healing because of their lack of faith (Mark 6:1-6)
 - The woman's persistence reveals a contrast: outsiders believe what insiders refuse to accept
 - Her faith shows the wideness of God's mercy and the breaking of ethnic (Jew/Gentile) barriers
- Jesus's mission is expanding from Israel's tradition to the world's need
- No one is too far gone or too far away for the grace of Christ
- After He leaves Tyre, He returns to the Decapolis and heals a man who is deaf and can't speak well
- He takes him aside privately, touches his ears and tongue, and says 'Ephphatha' – 'Be opened'
 - The miracle restores both hearing and voice immediately
- Jesus not only opens ears but hearts, enabling people to hear and declare God's praise
 - Remember, the Decapolis is also a Gentile area
 - The crowd is astonished and say, “He has done all things well”
 - This response recalls Genesis: creation was 'very good'
- Through Jesus, creation is being restored – wholeness replaces brokenness
- The right response to grace is gratitude and proclamation

CHAPTER 8

Feeding the 4,000 (Mark 8:1-10)

- Mark 8 marks a turning point in the Gospel narrative
 - It begins with compassion and miracles but moves toward the cross and the cost of discipleship
- Jesus's identity and mission are revealed through contrast – physical sight versus spiritual blindness
- The people have been with Jesus for 3 days
- He feels compassion towards them because they have no food left, so He wants to feed them
- The disciples ask, “Where are we gonna find enough food to feed them?”
- It was only 2 chapters ago that Jesus fed a larger crowd with 5 loaves and 2 fish
 - They now have 7 loaves and a few small fish
- Why are they balking at the idea that they can't feed this many people?
 - Remember that Mark specifically mentions (in Mark 6:52) that they were hard of heart and didn't learn from the feeding of the 5,000
- Their spiritual blindness is on display
 - We saw the same thing with the Israelites of old in the wilderness
 - They complained they had no food, so God gave them manna to eat every day, but they still didn't learn the lesson that God will provide
- We see the disciples here not carry over the lesson that Jesus can make it happen, despite a smaller crowd and more food
- In this case, they pulled together seven large baskets of scraps after the people had eaten their fill
- This time it was about 4,000 men
 - So probably between 8,000 and 15,000 people total

The Pharisees Demand a Sign (Mark 8:11-13)

- The Pharisees seek a sign to test Him
- Jesus already gave them plenty of signs
 - He just fed well over 4,000 people a moment before this, has done countless miracles, cast out demons, and healed thousands already
 - What kind of sign do they want?
- Jesus sighs deeply – grief and frustration over hardened unbelief of the religious leaders
- He says no
 - I think if they were honestly looking for proof that He was the Messiah, He would have provided that
 - He knows that anything that He did for a sign wouldn't convince them that He was the Son of God
- Faith does not grow from spectacle but from surrender

The Disciples Misunderstand (Mark 8:14-21)

- The disciples forget to take bread with them as they cross the lake yet again
- In the boat, Jesus warns about 'the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod'
- The disciples misunderstand, thinking He's speaking of physical bread
- Jesus reminds them of the miracles of feeding the crowds – they're still hard-hearted
 - You can hear Jesus's frustration in this passage that these men still don't understand
 - They're still thinking physically when He's been trying to get them to think spiritually for years
 - He knows His time is growing short, and they still have a lot of growing to do

Healing the Blind Man (Mark 8:22-26)

- When they get to Bethsaida on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, the people bring Him a blind man to heal
- We know that Jesus could heal this man in any way He wanted, and he would be healed immediately
 - There's a reason why He heals the man in two stages
- This unique two-step miracle mirrors the gradual understanding of the disciples
 - The disciples have "spiritual blindness" and they are being healed of that in steps
 - Partial restoration before full restoration
- Spiritual sight often comes progressively, not instantly – it's a process that takes some time
 - Jesus patiently leads believers from partial perception to full clarity as they mature in Christ

Peter's Declaration of the Christ (Mark 8:27-30)

- At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks, 'Who do people say that I am?'
- They tell Him, “The people say you’re John the Baptizer, Elijah, or one of the prophets”
 - Notably, the Messiah isn’t one of their choices
 - While the people flock to Him for healing and whatnot, they don’t think He’s the Messiah they’ve been waiting for
- Jesus then asks, “Who do you think I am?”
 - The “you” in Jesus’s question is plural – He’s asking all of the apostles who they think He is
- Peter plainly states, “You are the Christ”
 - He’s the one that answers, but it is almost certainly a consensus answer
 - Peter seems to be the spokesman for the apostles, at least in the Book of Acts
 - Acts 1:15, 2, 3:6, 3:12, 4:8, 5:3, 5:8, 5:29, 15:7
- It is a moment of great spiritual insight – but not yet full comprehension
 - This shows us that the “spiritual blindness” mentioned in the last few sections is slowly being peeled away
- Recognizing Jesus as the Christ is only the beginning
 - Understanding His mission requires the cross

“Get Behind Me, Satan” (Mark 8:31-33)

- Immediately after Peter’s confession, Jesus predicts His suffering and death
- Peter rebukes Him
 - The Messiah as he imagines Him is a conqueror, not a sufferer
 - There’s no doubt that Peter thinks that, if Jesus is the Messiah as he’s just stated, then He has the power to avoid any sort of suffering – and He’s right about that!
 - Peter is trying to help Jesus here, not become a stumbling block to Him
- Jesus responds firmly: 'Get behind Me, Satan!'
 - We know from His prayer in the Garden that Jesus doesn’t want to suffer the cross
- Even well-meaning followers can resist the cross when clinging to comfort or power
- We see here that while the disciples acknowledge Jesus as the Christ (that much of their “spiritual blindness” has been cured), they still don’t see clearly
 - Just like the man in the last section, they can see shadow and large shapes, but not the fine detail yet
- Jesus says, “You are setting your mind on the purposes of man, not of God”
 - This is the primary reason we sin
 - We think of ourselves instead of God

The Cost of Discipleship (Mark 8:34-38)

- Jesus outlines the core of discipleship: deny self, take up your cross, and follow Me
- This isn't symbolic suffering but total surrender
- The cross was always a death sentence
 - Saying we have to take up a cross means self must die
 - The cross represents submission, sacrifice, and steadfast faith
- Discipleship costs everything but gives eternal life
- Jesus teaches, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it"
 - That's a paradox of the kingdom – victory through surrender
 - Worldly gain cannot replace the soul's salvation
 - True life is found only in aligning with Christ's will
- Jesus warns that those ashamed of Him will face shame when He returns
 - Following Christ is public, not private
 - This is one of the reasons why our confession of Christ before we're baptized must also be out loud so others can hear (Romans 10:9)
 - Faith must be lived boldly
- Every disciple must decide daily whether to carry or conceal the cross
- Courageous confession and demonstration of submission to Jesus is a mark of genuine faith

CHAPTER 9

The Transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13)

- This is the last time in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus is in Galilee
- After this, he starts the journey to Jerusalem where He will be crucified
 - As He told the apostles in Mark 8:31
- Before that, though, He takes Peter, James, and John to the top of a high mountain
- Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John
- His appearance reveals divine glory hidden beneath His earthly form
- Moses and Elijah appear, representing the Law and the Prophets
- A voice from heaven declares: 'This is My beloved Son; listen to Him'
- God directs attention away from Moses and Elijah to Jesus alone
 - The time of the Old Law is ending and Jesus is the New Law
 - They disappear and only Jesus is left
- Jesus stands as the fulfillment and final authority of God's revelation
 - Authority now rests fully in Christ
- True discipleship begins by listening to Jesus above all others
- On the way back down the mountain, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they've seen until Jesus is resurrected
- They talk amongst themselves what Jesus could mean by that
 - This shows that they still don't have a full grasp of what is going on (still partially "spiritually blind")
- They ask Him why the scribes say Elijah must come first
 - This is Messianic prophecy that Matthew (3:3), Mark (1:2-3), Luke (3:4-6), and John (1:23) all quote
 - It was well-known that this would happen
 - The question shows that they didn't see John the Baptizer as Elijah
 - This is them asking, "If you're the Messiah, then why didn't Elijah come back like the scribes say would happen?"
 - Jesus corrects them and says he did come, and they killed him

Casting Out a Stubborn Demon (Mark 9:14-29)

- The disciples return from the glory on the mountain to confusion and failure
- When the people see Jesus, they were amazed and run up to Him
 - There's probably some sort of visual change lingering from His transfiguration, even if they don't know what happened
- A demon-possessed boy remains unhealed by the disciples despite their best efforts
 - We have the need for daily dependence on God
 - We will never be able to live this life in a godly manner without God
- Once the boy is presented to Jesus, the demon throws him into another fit of convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and rolling around on the ground
- The exchange that Jesus and the father then have is one of the most important conversations for us today that we read in any gospel
 - Jesus asks, "How long has he been like this?"
 - The father responds with, "Since he was a child. If you can do anything, help us!"
 - Jesus says, "If you can? All things are possible for the one who believes."
 - The father immediately cries out, "I do believe! Help my unbelief!"
 - His cry reveals honesty rather than hypocrisy
 - We can believe in God while, at the same time, harbor doubts about His ability to work in our lives
 - Not only is that not something to be ashamed of, it's perfectly normal
 - We must continue striving to increase not just our faith in God but our trust in Him
- Faith must function not only in moments of awe and spiritual highs, but in moments of frustration and doubt
 - We see here that Jesus responds to humble faith, even when it is incomplete or flawed
 - Growth in faith often begins with admitting weakness
- Later on, the disciples ask why they couldn't cast out the demon
- Jesus explains that some challenges require deeper reliance on God
 - The disciples' failure highlights misplaced confidence in themselves
 - Faith must be continually renewed through communion with God

Predicting His Death Again (Mark 9:30-32)

- Jesus tells His disciples again that He needs to die, but He'll be resurrected after 3 days
- The disciples don't understand what He means, but they're afraid to ask
 - This shows how they're belief in a physical king who will carve out a physical kingdom is absolute
 - They can't understand how Him saying He's going to be killed and then resurrected after 3 days could happen
 - This is the same as what Peter told Him in the last chapter (Mark 8:31-33)
 - Silence often hides fear of uncomfortable truth or pride of looking ignorant
- Jesus is trying very hard to get them to see that His path of glory still leads through suffering

The Greatest Among Them (Mark 9:33-37)

- As they walked, the disciples argued about who is greatest among them
- Jesus gathers them together and redefines greatness as humble service
 - True greatness is measured by willingness to serve, not status
 - In God's kingdom, humility is the mark of honor
- Jesus uses acknowledging a child as an illustration of kingdom values
 - In those days, children provided no value and were seen as nothing until they could help provide for the family in some way
 - That is, until they started adding value, they were seen as worthless
 - Jesus saying that they must receive a child to receive Him would be like someone saying you needed to treat an ant the same way you'd treat a king
- Welcoming the lowest is equivalent to welcoming Christ
- Spiritual maturity is shown by care for the overlooked
 - Conversely, pride distances us from the heart of Christ

Opposing Those Not With Them (Mark 9:38-41)

- John then pipes up and says, “We found some people casting out demons in Your name, but we tried to stop them because they didn’t follow You with us”
 - That people not following Jesus could cast out demons in His name shows the power His name held – just speaking His name without even following Him could do it
- Jesus warns against exclusivity among disciples – “Don’t stop them, because they can’t do that and then speak evil of me”
 - While they might not be followers of Christ when they do the miracle, the fact that they’re performing those miracles in His name will draw them and others to Him
 - Eventually, they will become His followers
- Those not opposing Christ are still participating in God’s work
 - “If someone gives you a cup of water because they know you follow Me, they won’t lose their reward”
 - Faithfulness includes recognizing God’s work beyond personal circles

The Seriousness of Sin (Mark 9:42-50)

- In this section, Jesus uses pretty blunt and evocative language to emphasize the seriousness of sin
 - “It’s better that you drown in the sea than to cause a believer in Jesus to sin”
 - “If your hand or foot or eye causes you to sin, it’s better to cut it off or pluck it out and be maimed than to go to Hell with all your parts”
- This shouldn’t be taken literally or we’d have millions of maimed people walking around
- However, it’s a serious warning nonetheless
- Jesus is saying that we have to go to any and all extremes to make sure we excise sin from our lives
 - Eternal consequences outweigh temporary comfort
 - True discipleship demands radical commitment
- He mentions that we must be salted with fire
 - Leviticus 2:13 says that salt was to accompany all grain offerings (at least) and all offerings, possibly
 - Numbers 18:19 mentions a permanent covenant of salt with the Lord
 - Salt and fire were 2 requirements of sacrifices to God
 - Most offerings also had to be burned on fire
- Our sacrifice of the sinful parts of our life to become more in line with Jesus is salt and fire to God
- His last comment that we should have salt in ourselves and be at peace with everyone goes back to the last section

CHAPTER 10

Teaching on Divorce (Mark 10:1-12)

- With Jesus now on the road to Jerusalem and crucifixion, His teaching becomes increasingly direct as He prepares His disciples for His death on the cross
 - Chapter 10 focuses on commitment
 - In marriage, in discipleship, and in the kingdom of God
- As He heads south, He crosses to the east side of the Jordan, and the crowd goes with Him
 - He begins to teach them, as He usually does
- Some Pharisees come up to test Him
 - Ask about divorce and marriage
- They ask, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”
- He asks back, “What does Moses (the Law) say?”
- “They can divorce if the husband gives his wife a certificate of divorce and then sends her away.”
- Jesus responds by saying, “The Law allowed that because of your hardness of heart.”
 - Speaking about mankind in general
 - God knew that sinful people would never obey a law that said, “No divorce”
 - This way, at least, the woman is protected and can get remarried
- However... !!!
- God’s original design for marriage was ALWAYS one man and one woman until death parted them
 - Jesus appeals all the way back to creation
 - This means that this has always been God’s intention within marriage
 - It was God’s law on marriage before the Law of Moses and its certificate of divorce existed
 - Marriage exemplifies unity, permanence, and mutual responsibility
- Kingdom living calls believers back to God’s original intent
- Most Jews of the day operated under the Hillel school of teaching that a man could divorce his wife for any reason (being an awful cook, not cleaning the house well, speaking to another man, etc.)
- When His disciples ask about His stance, He states that a spouse who divorces and marries another commits adultery
 - This is more a summary than exhaustive as Jesus says more in Matthew 19

Blessing the Children (Mark 10:13-16)

- People bring children to Jesus, but the disciples rebuke them
 - As mentioned in the notes for Mark 9:33-37, children were worth nothing until they could add value to the family
 - His disciples probably considered blessing children a waste of His time
- Jesus welcomes the children and rebukes the disciples instead
- He says that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these
 - Not children specifically, but people that can receive it like a child – with trust and humility
- Dependence on God, not achievement, marks true faith

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-22)

- A rich man comes to Jesus and asks Him a question – “Good Teacher, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
 - The question is asked genuinely by the man – he’s not trying to trick Jesus in any way
 - That he asked about eternal life tells us that he’s spiritually minded, which Jesus has been trying to lead His disciples to for most of His ministry
- Before answering the man’s question, Jesus comments about the “Good Teacher” salutation
 - “Why do you call Me good? Only God is good.”
 - This seems like a very weird thing to say; why does Jesus make a big deal about it?
 - If the man calls Jesus good and only God is good, then Jesus is claiming divinity and pointing out the man is accepting that Jesus is God
- After that, Jesus exposes the heart beneath the question
 - He tells the man to follow God’s commands
 - “Check! Been doing that since I was young”
 - No one can follow the Law of Moses perfectly
 - This shows the man doesn’t have an accurate picture of his standing before God
 - He thinks he can earn eternal life – “What must I DO to inherit eternal life?”
- Jesus says, in love, you trust in your riches instead of God
 - He challenges the man to part with his wealth
- The command reveals the obstacle between the man and eternal life – misplaced security
 - Eternal life requires removing rivals to God
 - Salvation is not earned
 - It demands allegiance and obedience

Who Can Be Saved? (Mark 10:23-31)

- Jesus reinforces His teaching to the rich, young ruler by saying to His disciples, “How hard it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven!”
 - They trust in their wealth instead of God, as mentioned in the last section
 - Paul tells Timothy (in 1 Timothy 6:17) the same thing by telling him to tell the rich not “to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God”
- The disciples are astonished at Jesus’s teaching on wealth
- Jesus then gives another example – it would be easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven
 - This is a literal comparison
 - The camel was one of the biggest animals they knew of back then
 - The eye of a needle is the smallest of openings
- God’s grace makes possible what seems impossible
 - Faith rests in obedience to God, not human capability
- Good ol’ Peter reminds Jesus of the sacrifices made by the disciples
 - In direct contrast to the rich man, Peter says, “Well, we did leave everything for you!”
- In response, Jesus says that those who do leave everything are rewarded
 - On earth, we get blessings one hundred fold (in the way of brothers and sisters in Christ and their love of us by supplying our needs)
 - In heaven, we get eternal life
- The blessings come with persecution, though
 - Discipleship is costly, but true gain is measured in eternal terms
- Wraps up by saying, “The first will be last and the last first.”
 - We’ll see this theme again soon

A Request for Positions of Honor (Mark 10:32-45)

- Jesus then predicts His suffering and death for the 3rd time in 3 chapters
 - Mark 8:31
 - Mark 9:30-32
- James and John come up and ask Him to do whatever they ask
- He says, “What do you want?”
- They request positions of honor
 - Apparently they didn’t hear Jesus say what He did in vs. 31 – or they didn’t understand it
- He says, “You don’t know what you’re asking, but do you think you can drink the cup that I’ll drink?”
- They say, “Yes, of course we can!”
- He says, “It’s not for me to give the positions you’ve asked for, but you will drink the cup”
 - James is killed in Acts 12:2 – the first apostle to be martyred
 - John was, according to (Catholic) church tradition, boiled in oil in Rome in the early 90s A.D. but he emerged unharmed
 - We know (from the Bible) that he was exiled to the island of Patmos in the mid-90s A.D.
- The other 10 apostles get indignant when they hear what James and John have requested
- Jesus calls them all to Him and clears the air by reiterating what He said in verse 31 – the last will be first and the first last
 - He redefines greatness as service and sacrifice
- He holds Himself up as an example of that
 - “The Son of Man came to serve and to give His life as a ransom”

Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

- As Jesus is leaving Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus cries out persistently for mercy
 - By calling Jesus the Son of David, he professes his faith that Jesus is the true Messiah
- They were telling him to be quiet, but he called out all the more for Jesus
 - Unlike the rich ruler, Bartimaeus recognizes his need for Jesus
 - He wasn't going to be deterred from doing everything he could do to get Jesus's attention
- Jesus tells them to bring him over, so they bring him to Jesus
- Jesus asks what Bartimaeus wants from Him
 - Jesus already knew, of course, but He makes Bartimaeus say it out loud
 - He wants everyone to hear the faith Bartimaeus has in asking Jesus for his sight
- Jesus heals him and says, "Your faith has made you well. Go."
- Bartimaeus immediately regains his sight, but he doesn't leave; instead, he follows Jesus
 - His faith moves him from the roadside to discipleship
- His spiritual sight leads him to following Jesus on the way
 - We must see through spiritual eyes to follow Jesus, but faith leads us to Him

CHAPTER 11

The Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1-14)

- Mark 11 begins the final week of Jesus's earthly ministry with the Triumphal Entry
- Jesus enters Jerusalem not as a hidden teacher, but as the proclaimed King
- This chapter marks a shift from previously teaching disciples to now confronting religious leaders through to His death
- Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a colt
 - He tells his disciples exactly where to go, what to do, and what to say
 - This wasn't just some random accident – Jesus planned for this
- The action fulfills prophecy and signals Messianic kingship
 - Zechariah 9:9
 - Jesus riding on a donkey would bring this prophecy to mind
- The crowds praise God that the king has come, but they still misunderstand the nature of His kingdom
 - The crowd that accompanied Him expects deliverance, but they expect deliverance from the Romans and other enemies around them
 - In other words, an earthly kingdom
- The group singing the Hosanna's are those people that followed Jesus down from Galilee
 - Psalm 118 is Messianic in nature
 - They are clearly proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah
- In Matthew 21:8-11 we see this crowd from Galilee that followed Him to Jerusalem proclaim as the Messiah as well, but Matthew also shows us the people from Jerusalem basically say, "Who's that guy?"
- Jesus accepts the praise, but He doesn't match their expectations
- He enters the Temple area, but then heads back to Bethany immediately
 - In Matthew, He cleanses the Temple at this point (Matthew 21:12-13) instead of the next day, as we'll see in the next section
- Jesus curses a fig tree that has leaves but no fruit
 - Mark doesn't connect the dots here, but the fig tree is symbolic of those that look good outwardly but are spiritually barren
 - Outward appearance without inward fruit invites judgment
 - God desires fruitfulness, not religious display
 - It's foreshadowing of Jesus's upcoming battle with the religious leaders who are supposed to be leading the people to God

Cleansing the Temple (Mark 11:15-19)

- Jesus cleanses the temple, driving out the merchants
 - They sold animals needed for sacrifice to those who'd traveled from far away – a needed service
 - However, they would price gouge, hence Jesus saying they'd made it a den of robbers
 - Greed and exploitation replaced reverence and worship
- They profited off a system that God put in place to help them draw closer to Him
- Rather than repent, the Jewish leaders harden their opposition to Him
 - Rejection of Jesus often comes from fear of losing control
 - They seek for a way to kill Him, but they don't just have Him arrested here because they're afraid of the people, who are amazed at Jesus and His teachings
- Jesus's actions are deliberate and prophetic
 - He even quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 as He cleanses the Temple

The Fig Tree Revisited (Mark 11:20-26)

- As they went back by the fig tree the next day, Peter points out that the tree had withered under Jesus's curse
- Jesus uses this as a teachable moment, and says that, with faith, you can do amazing things
 - Say to the mountain be taken up and thrown into the sea
 - Most people take this as allegorical
 - I think He's being literal – this would truly happen if we believe that it would
- Jesus also connects faith and receiving things through prayer to the necessity of forgiveness
 - He did the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount with what we usually call the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-14)
 - Mark 11:26, though in brackets here and not likely in Mark's original gospel, is a quote straight from Matthew 6:14
- The Temple cleansing mirrors the fig tree's curse
 - Both expose a system that looked alive but lacked spiritual fruit

Jesus's Authority Questioned (Mark 11:27-33)

- As they arrive in the Temple the next day, the religious leaders question Jesus's authority
 - Their challenge reveals their unwillingness to accept His divine truth
 - Clear from all the miracles Jesus did that He was the Son of God
- Jesus exposes their inconsistency without direct confrontation
 - He says, "I'll answer your question, but you have to answer Mine first"
 - By doing this, He is clearly the authority here, not the religious leaders
 - He sets the terms of the interaction, not them
- He asks about John's baptism – if it was from Heaven or man
 - They see the trap He's set for them
 - "If we say it was from heaven, He'll just take us to task for not believing it"
 - "If we say from man, all the people will riot because they considered John a prophet"
- They end up saying, "We don't know"
- Jesus says, "Then I won't answer your question either"
- Rejecting authority is often easier than submitting to it
 - The rejection of Jesus fulfills God's redemptive plan
 - He had to die on the cross for our sins
- Though rejected by leaders, Jesus remains God's chosen King
 - Human rejection cannot overturn divine purpose
 - God's plan advances despite opposition

CHAPTER 12

Parable of the Vine-growers (Mark 12:1-12)

- Jesus tells a parable about tenant farmers who reject the owner's servants
 - Starts out much like Isaiah 5
 - His audience would certainly draw the parallels between that passage and Jesus's parable
 - In Isaiah 5, Isaiah tells of a vineyard that a man spent no expense in building and protecting, so he expected good grapes to be produced from it, but it only produced bad grapes
- When the harvest has come, the owner sends multiple slaves to get the owner's cut, but the tenant farmers beat and kill them
 - The parable reflects Israel's history of rejecting God's messengers
 - Luke 11:47-48; Matthew 23:37
- The owner finally sends his son, thinking, "They'll respect him"
 - He's wrong
 - In fact, they plot to kill the son so that they will inherit the vineyard
 - They kill him and throw him out of the vineyard
 - That, of course, isn't how inheritances work – you don't kill the rightful heir and then get that heir's inheritance for yourself
- This parable, and the son of the owner more specifically, points directly to Jesus
 - He's God's son and Mark has already told us several times they're seeking to kill Him
- The owner is going to put the tenants to death instead of giving them his son's inheritance
- In verses 10 and 11, Jesus refers to the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone (quotes Psalm 118:22)
 - God exalts what people discard
- The kingdom is built on Christ, not human authority, and God does the building
- The religious leaders understand the implications of Jesus's parable and the rejection of the cornerstone
 - Rejection is not ignorance but willful resistance
- They're upset and angered by His parable but they don't want to seize Him because of His popularity among the people

A Question of Taxes (Mark 12:13-17)

- The Pharisees and Herodians pose a political trap
 - Pharisees wanted Rome out and hated paying taxes
 - Herodians loved Rome and enjoyed the stability they provided
- However Jesus answers their trap question (so they thought), one group would say He's right and the other would have Him arrested
 - Win-win, as far as they're concerned
- The conversation goes back and forth rather quickly
 - Them: "Should we pay taxes to Rome?"
 - If He says yes, the Pharisees and most of the people wouldn't follow Him because He's on Rome's side
 - If He says no, that's treason for disregarding the law of the land
 - Jesus: "Whose likeness and inscription is on the coins?"
 - Them: "Caesar"
 - Jesus: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"
 - Them: *awe*
 - The way Jesus answered, He left nothing for His questioners to hold against Him because He didn't say yes or no to paying taxes

A Trap Regarding the Resurrection (Mark 12:18-27)

- The Sadducees come up next and pose a question about the resurrection – a theological trap
 - The Sadducees don't believe in resurrection, and the absurdity of their question shows this
- The scenario they set up
 - A lady marries a man, but he dies, so the brother marries her, and then he dies
 - She marries 7 brothers and none of them provide heirs
 - Whose wife is she in the resurrection?
 - Based on Deuteronomy 25:5-10
- Jesus tells them they're asking the question from a faulty premise
 - In the resurrection, there's no marriage, so she's not anyone's wife
- He also makes sure to point out that the resurrection is real (by quoting Exodus 3:6), so they were also wrong about that

The Most Important Commandment (Mark 12:28-34)

- A scribe approaches Him after He's avoided the last two traps and poses a legal question
 - "What's the most important commandment?"
- The scribe appears to be sincere in his question
 - Mark doesn't mention it's a trap as he did with the last two questions, and Jesus compliments him at the end of the section for His insight
- Jesus's answer is to love God with all of you, but loving your neighbor is a close second
- The scribe then says that God loves those things more than all the sacrifices and burnt offerings
- Jesus's response to him – that he's not far from the kingdom of God – shows us that knowing the truth is essential, but we still have to respond
 - Knowledge doesn't equal discipleship

Is the Messiah the Son of David? (Mark 12:35-37)

- Jesus challenges assumptions about the Messiah's identity by asking how the scribes call the Messiah the Son of David
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-16 – Nathan prophecies that one of David's descendants will build an everlasting kingdom
- “The Son of David” was widely accepted as a title for the Messiah
 - Remember, Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) was crying out, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- Jesus points out that David calls Him Lord in Psalm 110:1
- This isn't a challenge of being called the Son of David
 - Jesus didn't correct Bartimaeus
- Instead, He wants the audience to rethink their expectations of the Messiah
 - “Son of David” would probably imply to Jews that He would construct a physical kingdom to replace that of the fractured Israel that existed in His day

A Pointed Warning (Mark 12:38-40)

- Jesus warns the people about the religious leaders who sought recognition
 - They seemed pious in many ways, but really they were interested in being puffed up and looking good
 - The things He mentions – long robes, personal greetings, seats of honor in the synagogues, places of honor at banquets, devouring widows' houses, and the appearance of long prayers – are all things that modern Christians can do a lot of as well
- Public displays of faith often mask inward corruption
 - Religion performed for attention misses God's heart
 - God sees motives, not appearances

The Widow's Copper Coins (Mark 12:41-44)

- After warning us about people who look pious but only do it for the recognition, we get a counter-example
- Jesus observes a poor widow giving two small copper coins
 - A lepton (plural: lepta) coin was about 1/64 (or even less) of a denarius – a day's wages
 - "Leptos" means "small or thin" in Greek
 - This would have been about half a penny in today's money
- Her gift is insignificant in value but great in sacrifice – it's all she had
 - Makes the gift with no fanfare at all
- True giving is measured by trust, not amount
 - God doesn't need anything from us
 - Psalm 50:10-12
 - Our giving is not to supply God's need, but to show Him how much we love Him and how much we trust Him to provide

CHAPTER 13

The Beautiful Temple (Mark 13:1-2)

- Most of Mark 13 is set on the Mount of Olives, but these first 2 verses are set in the Temple and on their way to the Mount of Olives
- One of Jesus's disciples admires the Temple buildings
- Jesus responds to that admiration of the Temple with a prophecy of destruction
 - Earthly structures, even sacred ones, are temporary
 - God's purposes are not tied to buildings

A Question about Signs (Mark 13:3-4)

- Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask Jesus when the Temple will be destroyed and a sign to show its coming
 - They ask 2 questions
 - Jesus answers both questions, but also gives more information than that
- There are lots of different (bad) theologies that arise from Jesus's answering these questions in Mark 13 regarding the end times
- The key to interpreting this section of Mark is to keep in mind the 2 questions they asked
 - "When will the Temple be destroyed?"
 - "What signs will happen so we know it's going to happen?"

Birth Pains (Mark 13:5-8)

- Jesus warns of false Messiahs and misleading signs
 - Wars and rumors of wars
 - Nation against nation
 - Earthquakes and famines
- “Those are just the beginning of the birth pains”
- Notice that none of these things is really unique
 - There have always been wars and always will be wars
 - Nations will constantly rise up against each other
 - Earthquakes and famine have always been a thing to watch out for
- What Jesus is really saying here is that there isn’t anything special about what will happen initially
 - There won’t be anything out of the ordinary

Persecution and Relational Strain (Mark 13:9-13)

- Disciples will face arrest and opposition
 - They'll be arrested, flogged, and stand before men of authority
- Persecution becomes an opportunity for testimony
 - We see this with Paul towards the end of Acts
- The Spirit provides words when believers witness to people
- Jesus then describes relationships that deteriorate or disintegrate altogether
 - Brother against brother
 - Father against child
 - Children against parents
- Jesus then says that everyone will hate you because of my name, but the one who endures it all to the end will be saved
 - Reliance on God and faith in Him is key to salvation in any situation – even when your life is in jeopardy
- Probably the most notable takeaway from this section is that Jesus tells them that there will be time for the gospel to be preached
 - In other words, the Temple is going to be destroyed that soon after Jesus dies

The Sign to Mark the Destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:14-23)

- The Abomination of Desolation is a reference to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11
 - Jesus references this in Matthew 24:15, Matthew's parallel passage to this chapter
 - Each time Daniel uses the phrase, it's an indication that a foreign power is going to destroy Jerusalem (and desecrate the Temple)
- Jesus, then, is referring here to a moment of decisive judgment against Israel, and when the Temple is destroyed
 - This is when Rome besieges Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 - This has nothing to do with end times, Jesus's return, or anything other than the Temple's destruction
- In Luke's account of this question and answer (in Luke 21:20), Luke doesn't use the phrase "abomination of desolation" because Gentiles wouldn't understand the reference
 - Instead, he writes "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize her desolation is near"
- Immediate action is required when the abomination is seen
 - Don't go into the house if you're on the rooftop
 - Don't go back home if you're in the field
 - Hope that you're not pregnant or that it doesn't happen in the winter (when you couldn't travel as fast)
- Jesus uses dramatic imagery to describe upheaval
 - Such language reflects divine judgment and authority
- Jesus also mentions that the Lord shortened those days to preserve life for the sake of the elect (the Church)
 - The siege of Jerusalem only lasted about 5 months, which is much shorter than a walled city with plenty of food and water would normally last in a siege like this
- Jesus has now answered their 2 questions

More about the Judgment of Israel (Mark 13:24-27)

- This section is almost always seen as talking about Jesus coming back at the end of time
 - In fact, many translations title this “The Return of Christ” or something similar
- Spoiler alert – that’s not what He’s talking about
 - This is still in regard to Israel’s destruction at the hands of Rome in 70 A.D.
- He quotes Isaiah 13:9-13 (specifically verse 10)
 - Isaiah 13 is a judgment brought on Babylon by God and has nothing to do with the return of Jesus
- This kind of language is used to describe how nations are judged, like Israel is about to be judged
 - See also Joel 2:10, 31; Jeremiah 4:23-25
- And the Son of Man in the clouds?
 - Jesus tells Caiaphas in Matthew 26:64 that he “will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven”
 - Refers to Daniel 7:13-14 where Jesus receives authority from God
- That imagery also doesn’t necessitate the end of time – it also implies judgment
- Lastly, Jesus says that the angels will gather up the people of God from the 4 winds, the ends of the earth to the end of heaven
 - God will gather His people from everywhere after the Temple is destroyed
 - I think this means it’s only after the Jewish religion ends (with the ability to follow it destroyed along with the Temple) that God will claim all the people that will believe in Christ and join them within the body of Christ
- We see many places in the Old Testament where this type of imagery doesn’t necessitate the end of time
 - Deuteronomy 30:3-4; Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 36:24
- To wrap up, this section is commonly explained to mean Jesus’s second coming, but there’s nothing Jesus says that must mean that
- Because He’s answering a question of “When is the Temple going to be destroyed?”, it makes more sense that this is related to Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D. when the Temple is destroyed

Read the Signs (Mark 13:28-32)

- Jesus teaches discernment through a simple illustration
 - You know summer is near when the fig tree's leaves sprout
 - You'll know that I can return when you see these things happen
- These signs point to nearness, not exact timing
 - Important to understand that Jesus saying Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed had to happen before He could return, but that doesn't mean it has to happen immediately after
- Jesus even tells us in verse 30 that the things He's mentioned will all happen before that generation passes away
 - He spoke these words around 30 A.D., so 40 years is about right for that generation to start passing away

Emphasizing the Uncertainty of the Timing (Mark 13:33-36)

- He says that only God knows exactly when the Temple will be destroyed
- Jesus emphasizes the uncertainty of exact timing
 - The angels don't know
 - Neither does He, even
 - Only God the Father knows
- Gives a very short example
 - If the master leaves, the slaves must be ready for his return at any time
- While He's not talking about His second coming in this section, we also need to be ready for that too because He is coming back

CHAPTER 14

Man's Plan vs. God's Plan (Mark 14:1-2)

- This chapter starts by setting the stage as the final hours before Jesus's crucifixion
- Mark states plainly that the religious leaders are plotting to kill Jesus after the Passover
 - They don't want to arrest Him during the festival or the people will revolt
- God's plan unfolds the way He wants it, despite man's plotting to do things another way
 - God is in control

A Woman Anoints Jesus's Head (Mark 14:3-11)

- A nameless woman anoints Jesus with expensive perfume
 - John has a similar account in John 12, but names the woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and it happens in their home
 - It's entirely possible that these incidents both happen the way the authors describe – Jesus could have been anointed twice
 - It's also possible that Mark obfuscated the incident here so no one knew who had done this (sort of like changing the names to protect the innocent), but he wanted to be sure the audience knew that it had happened
- Her act is criticized as wasteful by others
 - John says it was Judas who objected to this “waste” because he was stealing from the purse
- Jesus defends her, recognizing her true devotion
 - Love for Christ is never wasted
- He points out that they'll always have the poor, but He will only be there a little while longer
- Jesus also explains the anointing as preparation for His burial
 - While the others misunderstand, this act honors the sacrifice He's about to make
- Finally, he adds that she will always be remembered for this act (and she is!)
- Judas leaves there to visit the chief priests to betray Jesus
- Many people want to connect this to the anointing that just happened
 - This “waste”, as Judas saw it, might have been part of why Judas betrays Jesus, but his ultimate motivation is greed, pure and simple
- Judas leaves there to visit the chief priests to betray Jesus
- The chief priests were excited to have “turned” one of Jesus's twelve apostles to their cause
- Promised him money (30 pieces of silver, we find out in Matthew 26)
 - 30 pieces of silver is about 4 months wages
- He started looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus

Preparation for the Passover (Mark 14:12-16)

- Jesus deliberately prepares for the Passover meal
 - Nothing in these final hours before the crucifixion happens by accident
 - Jesus might have previously planned it out, or this might be miraculous on His part, but He tells the disciples exactly what to do
 - This level of detail in preparation is not unlike securing the triumphal entry colt
- His preparation reveals Jesus's awareness and control of events

The Passover (Mark 14:17-21)

- As they sat for the meal, Jesus told all the apostles that one of them there would betray Him
- They each say, “Surely not me!”
- Mark doesn’t specifically say it was Judas here, as he did so at the beginning of the chapter
 - He does record Jesus identifying the betrayer as the one dipping bread with Him in the bowl
- A lesson for us: Jesus loved Judas so perfectly that none of the apostles suspected it was him that would betray Jesus until He told them
 - That’s how we need to love people as well
- Finally, Jesus says that what is about to happen is going to happen according to God’s plan
- Still, it would have been better if the betrayer hadn’t been born

The Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-25)

- Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper during the Passover
 - The bread and cup point to His body and blood
- Doing this during the Passover memorial shifts focus from deliverance from Egypt (which is what the Passover was intended for) to deliverance from sin (because Jesus will die for our sins as the new Passover Lamb)
- Jesus speaks of a new covenant
- His sacrifice establishes a new relationship between God and man
- The Lord's Supper as we celebrate it now proclaims both death and hope
 - Disciples participate through remembrance and gratitude

Jesus Predicts the Apostles Abandoning Him (Mark 14:26-31)

- After singing a hymn, they travel to the Mount of Olives
- Jesus prophesies that they are all about to fall away (and scatter)
 - Quotes Zechariah 13:7
- He'll see them in Galilee after
- Peter, being Peter, says, "I won't fall away!"
- Jesus replies with another prophecy
 - "Before the rooster crows 2 times, you'll deny me three times"
- Peter – "No way! I won't betray you even if I have to die with you!"
- Mark notes that all of them were saying that, too

In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)

- Once they get to Gethsemane, Jesus tells most of His disciples to wait while He prays
- Takes Peter, James, and John a little farther on, then tells them to wait there and keep watch while He goes on a little farther to pray alone
- Prays that the cup would pass from Him
 - He doesn't want to die on the cross
 - Most importantly, though, "Not what I will, but what You will"
- Goes back and finds them asleep 3 times
 - The second time, it says their eyes were heavy
 - There's some debate whether this slumber they fell into was a natural or supernatural one
 - None of the gospels say either way, but it's probably pretty late at night by now; very feasible they're just tired because it's late
- After the 3rd time, He says, "They're here"

Jesus's Betrayal and Arrest (Mark 14:43-52)

- Judas arrives with a crowd armed with swords and clubs
 - Sent by the Jewish religious leaders
- Judas kisses Jesus, and that's the sign he arranged to point out which one was Jesus
- One of the disciples with Jesus cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave
 - John 18 identifies this as Peter striking Malchus's ear
 - More than likely, Peter was aiming to chop Malchus's head off, but Malchus leaned over to dodge the blow and the sword only got his ear
- Jesus questions the way in which He's arrested
 - "You've come as if I've led a revolt. You couldn't arrest Me while I've been teaching in the Temple every day?"
- Just as He'd told them, all His disciples flee
- Vss. 51-52 talk about a young man who they tried to seize, but he was able to get away naked
- Most scholars identify this as John Mark, the gospel's author
 - We know from Acts 12 that Mark's mom lived in Jerusalem
 - It wouldn't be hard to imagine him being among the group if he lived there with his mom

Jesus Stands Before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65)

- Jesus is taken before the Sanhedrin with Peter following at a distance
 - Peter ends up in the courtyard of the high priest's house where he warms himself by the fire among the officers who just arrested Jesus
- The Sanhedrin tries to obtain testimony to sentence Him to death, but they can't find any
- Many were giving false testimony, but none of it was consistent enough to pass judgment
 - Bearing false witness is against the Law of Moses, of course
 - Exodus 20:16 – the Ninth Commandment
- The high priest then turns to questioning Jesus instead of trying to find people to lie about Him
 - “Are you not going to respond to what they're saying about you?”
- He kept silent to fulfill a prophecy
 - Isaiah 53:7
- Finally, the high priest just point blank asks Jesus, “Are you the Messiah?”
- Jesus says, “Yes, and you're going to see me sitting at God's right hand holding power”
- The high priest tears his clothes, “Blasphemy!”
 - Claiming to be God was blasphemous for the Jews
 - Of course, it's only blasphemy if it's not true
- The Sanhedrin immediately declares that He must die
- They spit on Him, blindfold Him, and beat Him, then turn Him over to the officers to take Him to Pilate
 - The Romans took away the Jews' ability to enact capital punishment
 - The Roman governor had to find the person worthy of death, and then the Romans would kill the prisoner instead

Peter's Denials (Mark 14:66-72)

- While the trial is going on, Peter is in the courtyard below
 - A slave woman says, "You were with Him."
 - Peter denies it and then went out onto the porch
- Peter denies it again
- Other bystanders say, "You were with Him because you're a Galilean"
 - This time, Peter curses and swears he doesn't know Jesus
- Just then, the rooster crows the 2nd time
- Peter remembers Jesus's words
- He runs away and begins to weep, knowing Jesus spoke the truth earlier about his denials
- We need to acknowledge that Peter sinned in denying Jesus
- Other than Peter, though, only John went to the High Priest's house to see what would happen to Jesus
 - The rest of the apostles couldn't even find that much courage

CHAPTER 15

Jesus Questioned By Pilate (Mark 15:1-5)

- Jesus is delivered to Pilate early in the morning
- Pilate asks if He is king of the Jews
 - Probably told this by the Jews who wanted Pilate to try Him
 - Notice it's a political accusation, not a religious one
 - Pilate wouldn't have cared if it was anything but political
- Jesus's answer is, "You have said it"
 - He's saying yes without saying yes
 - He's much more than "just" the king of the Jews, though
- The Jews start accusing Him of anything they can think of
 - Maybe if they say enough bad things, something will trigger Pilate to have Him killed
- Despite all the accusations, Jesus says nothing
- Pilate even asks Jesus if He has a defense with so many accusations flying
- Jesus just stands there mute, which amazes Pilate
 - Most people would scream and yell that they were innocent, especially if they really were innocent
 - All the more in this case because Pilate literally has the power of life and death in his hands
 - But death on a cross is God's plan, so it has to go this way

The Release of Barabbas (Mark 15:6-15)

- Mark gives us some crucial background information that Pilate had a custom of releasing a prisoner during the Passover
 - Builds good will between Jews and Rome
 - Pilate needed it, as he was on pretty thin ice with Rome
 - They were about to strip him of his assignment and recall him
- Mark tells us of a man named Barabbas
 - He was imprisoned during a rebellion
 - He had committed murder
- The crowd asks Pilate to release someone, as was his custom
 - Pilate sort of figures that they are asking him to release Jesus
 - Would be great for Pilate, as he didn't think Jesus was worthy of death and it would be an easy "out" for him not to have to make a decision
- The crowd is stirred up to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus
- So Pilate asks the crowd, "What do you want me to do with Jesus, then?"
- "Kill Him! Crucify Him!" is their response
- Pilate acknowledges that Jesus hasn't done anything
- They continue to shout for His crucifixion
- To appease the people, Pilate releases Barabbas, who is in fact a threat to Rome, and has Jesus flogged and turned over to the soldiers to be crucified
 - He knew Jesus had done nothing worthy of death
 - Cowardice breeds compromise
 - It was better for Pilate to kill this one Jew and have the rest of the Jews at peace with Rome than to let Him go and have the rest angry at him

Jesus is Mocked (Mark 15:16-20)

- The Roman soldiers brought Jesus into the Praetorium and called the whole Roman cohort in to mock Jesus as 'King of the Jews'
 - The Praetorium is the official residence of the Roman governor
 - The Praetorium also tended to serve as a barracks for a cohort of Roman soldiers who were the bodyguard of the governor
 - A cohort was 480 soldiers
- They put a purple robe on Jesus, put a crown of thorns on His head, and place a reed scepter in His hand
 - They strike Him in the head with the reed and spit on Him
 - Like the “Why are you hitting yourself?” game kids play
 - Full of irony – they are mocking the true King because they think He’s a pretend king
- Once they finish their fun, they put His own clothes back on Him and lead Him out to be crucified

Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21)

- After the beating and flogging, Jesus couldn't physically handle the walk with his cross from the Praetorium to Golgotha
 - About 2000 feet or 1/3 of a mile
 - It's a winding, uphill path
- Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry the cross
 - The Romans didn't ask; they told
 - Simon would have been a Jew who'd come to Jerusalem for the Passover
- Mark tells us that Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus
 - Since Mark gives us their names, these are probably people that were known within the early Church
 - It seems like Simon's family became Christians early on

Jesus is Crucified (Mark 15:22-32)

- Arrive at Golgotha, the Place of the Skull
- The soldiers offer Jesus wine mixed with myrrh
 - Many will say that this was given as a pain reliever
 - The Romans wanted crucifixion to be awful and painful; it was supposed to be horrible to keep everyone else in line
 - More mockery and insult, probably, but fulfills Psalm 69:20-21
- “And they crucified Him”
 - So succinct and short that it’s easy to miss
- Divided up His garments, casting lots on what they got to take
- Crucified Him in the 3rd hour
 - 9 a.m. in Jewish time
- The Romans would hang a plaque on the cross with the charge that resulted in a person’s crucifixion
- Jesus’s charge was “King of the Jews”
- Mark mentions that 2 other rebels (or robbers) were crucified with Jesus – one on His left and one on His right
- All the people were hurling abuse at Him
 - Those passing by
 - Golgotha was along a road leading out of Jerusalem, so a sort of highway for the execution to be seen by the people
 - The chief priests and scribes
 - Even the 2 crucified with Him are hurling abuse at Him
- All of these people were taunting Him by saying that He claims to be the Son of God, but He can’t even save Himself
 - Of course, we know that He wasn’t supposed to save Himself
- In fact, God’s plan necessitated the death of Jesus on the cross
 - 1 Corinthians 1:18

Darkness and Death (Mark 15:33-39)

- From the 6th to 9th hour, darkness covers the land
 - This is 12 noon to 3 p.m.
- Creation responds to the suffering of its Creator
 - Eclipses last minutes, not hours, so this isn't a natural occurrence
- The people witnessing it may not link this darkness to God's judgment, but everyone knows that it shouldn't be dark from noon to 3 p.m.
 - As the darkness relents, Jesus quotes Psalm 22
 - There are MANY parallels between Jesus's crucifixion and Psalm 22
- His cry reflects anguish and trust
 - He experiences the depth of suffering
- Someone runs to give him more sour wine, hoping to prolong the suffering to see if Elijah, who they think He's calling out to, will come save Him
- He cries out and dies
- Mark tells us at the moment of His death, the Temple curtain is torn in two from top to bottom
 - This is the thick, heavy curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple
 - With the sacrificial lamb dead, the New Covenant has been enacted
 - God is now no longer separate from man because Jesus is our way to stand before God whole and complete
- Finally, with all that has happened, a centurion standing there before Jesus says, "Surely He truly was the Son of God"
- Even this Gentile soldier who, moments before, was mocking Him, acknowledges who Jesus truly is
 - He sees what the religious leaders could not see or would not acknowledge

Jesus is Buried (Mark 15:40-47)

- Some of the women that followed Jesus were there and watched the crucifixion
 - Mary Magdalene
 - Mary, the mother of James the Less
 - Not James and John, but the other apostle named James
 - Salome
- When evening came (so, 6 p.m. – about 3 hours after Jesus died), they were preparing for the Sabbath
- Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, asks Pilate for Jesus's body
- Pilate is surprised that Jesus is dead
- Once he learns that Jesus is dead, he allows Joseph to have Jesus's body
 - This was unusual for Roman crucifixion victims
 - The Romans typically buried crucifixion victims in mass graves to not allow a victim to be acknowledged in any way as special
 - Pilate probably allowed it because he didn't believe Jesus should have been killed
- Joseph wraps Jesus in a linen cloth and places Him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a large stone against the entrance
- Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James the Less makes sure they know where His body is so they can prepare it properly for burial after the Sabbath

CHAPTER 16

The Resurrection (Mark 16:1-8)

- Mark 16 opens early on Sunday, the first day of the week
- Some of the women who followed Jesus come to the tomb expecting to finish burial preparations
 - Doing this would make them unclean
 - Numbers 19:11-13
- They wonder how they're going to get the massive stone rolled away to go in and prepare Jesus's body for burial
- When they get there, they see that the stone has already been rolled away
- They enter the tomb and see a young man sitting there wearing a white robe
- They are amazed
 - At what?
 - Jesus's body is gone, but someone else is just sitting in His tomb
 - They've got to be thinking, "Why would someone take His body and then stay in the tomb?"
- The young man in the tomb tells them that Jesus is risen
 - Just as Jesus promised would happen
- Then the young man tells them to go tell the disciples and Peter to meet Him in Galilee, just as He'd told them to do
 - The young man specifically mentions Peter by name
 - "Peter needs to go, too"
- They ran out of the tomb
- They were trembling and astonished
 - None of this is normal
 - Dead people don't raise from the grave
 - Angels don't sit in now-empty tombs with orders to tell others to go somewhere
- They said nothing because they were afraid
 - What were they afraid of?
 - People are going to say we're crazy!
 - What if we get accused of moving Jesus's body? The authorities will kill us too!
- Jesus has been resurrected
 - What will you choose to do with that information?

The Debate about Mark 16:9-20

- The 2 earliest complete Greek manuscripts of the Bible that we've found, the Codex Sinaiticus (dated to the 4th century AD) and Codex Vaticanus (also the 4th century AD), don't have verses 9-20
 - Mark ends with verse 8
- Starting in verse 9 through the end of the book, the text is bracketed
- Around the late 4th century, the last 12 verses started appearing in Greek manuscripts
- However, early church writers (starting in around 170 AD) quoted parts of these 12 verses as though Mark wrote them
- Nearly everything contained within these 12 verses can be found in other gospels, so including it at the end of Mark 16 doesn't change anything
 - More on this below
- Ultimately, it's up to you to decide if you think they should be included as part of the text
 - Personally, since they don't add anything we don't find elsewhere, I rarely reference them in studies and whatnot
- We actually have 5 different endings for Mark in various manuscripts
 1. Stop at verse 8
 2. A "short ending" that says the women told those around Peter, and then Jesus Himself told them to preach the gospel everywhere
 3. The "long ending" that we see as vss. 9-20 (lots of manuscripts include these verses)
 - Not a single Greek manuscript we have before the 5th century has vss. 9-20 in it
 - Early writers acknowledged this ending existed by about 200 A.D., though
 4. 1 manuscript has the "short ending" followed by the "long ending"
 5. A "longer ending" that has all of the long ending, and then adds even more after verse 14 where the Jesus chastises the apostles for not believing He has risen, and Jesus says, "Satan's time is over."
- I'll run through the verses so we can see what they say, to show they don't add anything new

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11)

- A very, very brief account of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb
 - Seems to be an abbreviated version of John 20:11-18
- Peter and John ran in, saw the tomb empty, and then left, but Mary stayed outside (John 20:1-6)
- Jesus appeared to her there

Abbreviation of the Road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13)

- A very, very brief account of Jesus appearing to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus
 - Luke 24:13-35
- It says that Jesus appeared “in a different form” to two people while they were headed into the country
 - What does “in a different form” mean?
 - We don’t know
 - Could be a body that is different than the body He had before His resurrection
 - Would still be a physical body of some kind, but different in some way

Appearance to the 11 Apostles (Mark 16:14-20)

- Jesus appears to the 11 apostles
 - Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23
- Gives them the commission to preach the gospel
 - Matthew 28:16-20
- Ascends to Heaven
 - Acts 1:9-11
- It's in this section we have the only item that's unique to Mark's gospel
 - In verse 18, Jesus mentions picking up serpents (which we see in Acts 28:3 with Paul) and drinking deadly poisons with no harm coming to them (nowhere else in the New Testament is this seen or mentioned)

Post verse 20 (Mark 16:20b)

- Some versions will have yet another section after the end of verse 20 that is also bracketed and in italics
 - The New American Standard is one such version
- It says “they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions...” followed by more after this
- This seems to go back to the women whom the young man spoke to and told them to tell the disciples what he said
- We then have a reiteration that Jesus sent them out to preach the gospel