



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS



Mark 1:1–13

Prepare the way of the Lord!

Look

John Mark, a young man from the early Jerusalem congregation, is considered to be the man through whom God wrote this gospel. From the early testimony of Eusebius, we learn that Mark obtained much of his information from Peter, with whom he served in Rome. Mark writes swiftly and briefly, moving from one account to the next without any attempt to provide a strict chronology of the life of Christ. Verse 1 sets the theme for this gospel.

Discuss

1. With which event in the life of Christ does Mark begin his gospel? How is his beginning different from the other three gospels?
2. Who is being spoken of in the quotations from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3?
3. What was the nature of John's baptism? What did the Lord want to accomplish through John?
4. What did John confess about himself and about Jesus?
5. What is the meaning of God the Father's words at Jesus' baptism? See also John 3:13.

Apply

6. The Romans often used wild animals in their persecution of Christians. Why are Mark's words in verse 13 comforting to us?

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for his Messiah. John testified to Jesus' power. Jesus was baptized by John, and the Father put his stamp of approval on the work of his Son. Jesus then went into the wilderness to overcome Satan's temptation in our place.

Mark 1:14–28

Jesus calls his first disciples and begins to show his power

Look

Verse 15 *“The kingdom of God is at hand.”* Jesus came to establish God’s kingdom of love, grace, and power for all. We become part of that kingdom through repentance and faith. The phrase “at hand,” gives a sense of immanence implied in John’s and Jesus’ message.

“Repent”—Literally “to have a change of mind” about one’s relationship to God—to recognize the severity of our sins and know God’s forgiveness.

Verse 25 *“Be silent”*—Jesus did not want or need the testimony of the demon, even if it was true. Yet the fact the devil knew exactly who Jesus was shows us how foolish those who rejected Jesus were.

Discuss

1. Compare the message of Jesus with that of John the Baptist. Describe their similarities. Can you find any dissimilarities in their messages? What does this tell you about the preaching of both Jesus and John?
2. What would Jesus do with the disciples over the next three years? (verse 17)
3. Jesus began his ministry with two powerful activities. What were they? What impression did they have on the people?

Apply

4. How did these four disciples respond to the call of Christ? What was the cost of their discipleship? What does the Lord expect of those who want to become his disciples?

Jesus began his public ministry, called his first disciples, and began to preach and perform miracles.

Mark 1:29–2:12

Meditate on the message of Christ's miracles of healing

Look

- 1:44 *"Offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded"*—Note that Jesus did not ignore the statutes of the Old Testament. Jesus did not come to set aside the law, but to fulfill it.
- 1:45 *"Jesus could no longer openly enter a town."* Jesus was not a "bread" king, sent to supply the people's physical needs. Yet the more he performed signs testifying to the advent of his kingdom, the more the people misunderstood the nature of his kingdom and looked to him merely for physical help.
- 2:12 *"They were all amazed and glorified God."* This is the goal of every miracle that Jesus performed. In the gospel of John, miracles are sometimes called *signs* because they point to someone greater than the miracle.

Discuss

1. Mark continues to record Jesus' early miracles. Perhaps he does this to get the attention of the Roman people, who were impressed with shows of power. What miracles did Jesus perform in Capernaum, his home base when he was in Galilee?
2. Jesus healed a man with leprosy. What do we learn here about Jesus' compassion?
3. What was the first thing Jesus did for the paralyzed man whose friends let him down through an opening in the roof?
4. This miracle gives us insights into the kingdom of God and Jesus' miracles. Apart from proving that Jesus was compassionate, what more important truth did Jesus' miracles teach the people?

Apply

5. Jesus performed miracles and taught the people. But he always took the time to do something else. What was that? What lesson can we learn from him?

Jesus' Galilean healing ministry showed his power over the effects of sin and, most important, over the guilt of sin as well.

Mark 2:13–3:6

Jesus calls Matthew; Jesus' presence negates ceremonies that pointed to him

Look

- 2:14–16 *"Tax collectors"*—Tax collectors were despised by the Jews and regarded as traitors for collecting money for the Roman government. By their association with Gentiles and "sinners," they were regarded as ceremonially unclean and therefore were excluded from the church of Jesus' day.
- 2:18 *"Fasting"*—Fasting was a sign of sorrow and repentance. It was proper to do that in the days before Jesus came. Fasting was combined with prayer, asking God to fulfill his promises to send the Savior and deliver them from sin and oppression.

Discuss

1. What was unusual about Jesus calling Levi (Matthew) to become his disciple? How did Jesus, by this choice, demonstrate the meaning of the gospel? And what does Matthew's response to Jesus' invitation tell us about him?
2. In what way did the Pharisees exclude themselves from God's kingdom?
3. Why did Jesus and his disciples refuse to follow the customary days of fasting? How does the parable of the marriage festival reveal their attitude about fasting? What are the new wineskins and the new unshrunk cloth?
4. The next two accounts involving the Sabbath make much the same point as the account of fasting. What was the purpose of the Sabbath? Why was Jesus greater than the Sabbath?

Apply

5. How could Jesus' call of Matthew help you share the good news of Jesus with someone who wanted to know more about Christianity?

Jesus showed mercy to Matthew. Jesus began setting aside Moses' laws.

Mark 3:7–35

Jesus appoints disciples; he is accused of blasphemy

Look

Verses 13–19 Here the disciples are called apostles, those who are “sent out.” They have grown from learners and followers to become ambassadors of Christ.

Verse 22 “*Beelzebul*”—Literally, lord of flies.

Discuss

1. What points does Mark make in verses 7–12?
2. Jesus designated some of his disciples as apostles. What is the difference?
3. Although Jesus performed many miracles and spoke with authority, many people began to reject him. What did his family think of him? Even worse, what did the religious leaders think of him?
4. How did Jesus show that the Pharisees’ charge was completely illogical?
5. Why were the Pharisees in danger of sinning against the Holy Spirit and committing the only sin that cannot be forgiven?

Apply

6. The crowd had come to Jesus to see and experience his miraculous power (verses 7–12). Members of Jesus’ family had accused him of being out of his mind (verses 20–21). The Pharisees had accused Jesus of driving out demons by the prince of demons (verse 22). Yet some were true members of Jesus’ family. Who are they—then and today?

There were many reasons people came to Jesus. There were several interpretations of Jesus’ actions and source of power. However, there were many who believed in him and who served him in truth.

Mark 4:21–41

Jesus' parables are validated with a miracle

Look

Verse 31 *"Mustard seed"*—This is not the smallest of all seeds but the smallest of seeds usually planted in the garden. This insignificant seed is capable of producing the largest of all garden plants; it even offers shade and refuge for birds.

Verse 37 *"A great windstorm"*—Most of Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen quite familiar with the Sea of Galilee. This storm was beyond their ability.

Discuss

1. Each of these parables teaches the disciples about work in the kingdom of God. What instructions does each parable give? What encouragement does it give?

- The parable of the lamp

- The parable of the growing seed

- The parable of the mustard seed

Apply

2. Contrast Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat with the fear and anxiety of the disciples. Is Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat of your life?

3. How does the account of the storm help you when you think about taking part in the work of extending the kingdom?

Jesus taught his disciples (and all future disciples) about the kingdom: Proclaim the Word. God will work through it. The kingdom will grow. Nothing in all creation will stop you.

Mark 5

Jesus drives out demons and heals an “unclean” woman

Look

- Verse 1 *“Gerasenes”*—This area was located in the Decapolis, an area southeast of the Sea of Galilee. This region was populated by both Jews and Gentiles.
- Verse 9 *“Legion”*—A military term referring to a unit of six thousand men.
- Verse 11 *“A great herd of pigs”*—Pigs were considered unclean animals. Jews were forbidden by God to own them or eat them. We are not told whether these pigs were owned by Jews or Gentiles, but their miraculous demise was a warning to every fallen-away Jew in the region.

Discuss

1. How did Mark show the power of Satan? How did he show the power of Jesus?
2. What was the tragic reaction of the people to the miracle Jesus performed?
3. How did the Lord put Jairus to an especially great test?
4. Why would the woman have found it very difficult to approach Jesus for healing?

Apply

5. A member of your congregation wants to become a full-time worker in God’s church. The pastor and other members of the congregation dissuade him from doing this. They feel he would serve the church better if he remains a worker on the local level. Should they feel bad about the advice they have given this willing person?

Jesus drove out demons, healed a woman’s illness, and raised a young girl from the dead. Jesus healed bodies to prove to the world that he healed the souls of all.

Mark 6:1–29

Learn from Jesus how to deal with rejection

Look

Verse 1 *“His hometown”*—Nazareth.

Verse 3 *“Brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon . . . his sisters”*—After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph probably had other children. Note that Joseph is not mentioned in the list. He probably had died sometime earlier.

Verse 13 *“Anointed with oil many who were sick”*—Olive oil was used as a soothing treatment of various illnesses. Its use does not detract from the healing power Jesus gave the disciples.

Discuss

1. Many who heard Jesus preach in his hometown synagogue were amazed at what he said. But something kept them from listening to him. What was that?
2. What was the purpose of the instructions given to the twelve disciples? How does the wisdom of these instructions apply to our own time?
3. Mark relates the account of John the Baptist’s death. But as he does, he teaches us something about who the people thought Jesus was. In a roundabout way, even Herod was forced to acknowledge Jesus’ power. What did Herod’s guilty conscience convince him had happened?
4. How had John testified against Herod? How had Herod received John’s testimony? What did Herod’s foolishness lead him to do?

Apply

5. Jesus was rejected in his hometown, the disciples met opposition, and John the Baptist was unjustly put to death. What can we learn from Jesus about how to deal with opposition?

The people opposed the gospel, but Jesus continued in his ministry.

Mark 6:30–56

Jesus feeds five thousand people, and he walks on water

Look

Verse 48 *“Fourth watch”*—Between 3 and 6 a.m.

Verse 52 *“Their hearts were hardened.”* The disciples’ hearts were not hardened in opposition to Jesus and his ministry but hardened in spiritual understanding. They failed to grasp the purpose and full meaning of the miracle of bread and fish as well as the stilling of the storm.

Discuss

1. Which details of the feeding of this multitude make clear that this event was a miracle? How were these miracles symbolic of the spiritual blessings Jesus desires to bring to all people?
2. How did Jesus put the disciples to a test? (verse 37)
3. Describe the dilemma the disciples faced as they made their way to Bethsaida. Note the severity of their situation.
4. How did Jesus show his power over nature?
5. Describe Jesus’ patience with the many who came to him only for physical reasons.

Apply

6. Note the examples that Jesus set in verses 41 and 43 in regard to receiving food. How well do we follow his example? Which one of these examples do Christians often forget to follow?

Jesus fed the five thousand and rescued his disciples from a storm on the Sea of Galilee. All of this served to strengthen the disciples’ faith and to show them the power of his kingdom.

Mark 7:1–23

Watch out for false piety

Look

- Verse 3 *“Wash their hands”*—This ceremonial washing was an expansion of God’s commandment for priests prior to entering the tabernacle (Exodus 30:19; 40:12). There was no biblical command to wash before eating or for extensive washing of various eating utensils. While such washings were hygienically wise and good common sense, the Pharisees and teachers of the law insisted that these washings were a proper interpretation of God’s will—and thus mandatory.
- Verse 5 *“Tradition of the elders”*—These were man-made interpretations of God’s law. Unfortunately, the Jewish leaders considered these traditions more important than the original law of God.
- Verse 11 *“Corban”*—A gift dedicated to God. This was a gift the giver withheld from his parents. It could also be withheld from God and used by the giver himself.
- Verse 19 *“Thus he declared all foods clean.”* The church would have to wrestle with this point for many years. Mark may have included this to make it clear to his Roman readers that they were under no obligation to keep the ceremonies, which many of the Jews around them chose to keep.

Discuss

1. How did Jesus answer the complaint that his disciples did not wash their hands before they ate? By what authority did Jesus make his point?
2. In what way did the tradition regarding Corban “[make] void the word of God”?
3. According to Jesus, how could a person’s “cleanness” be determined?

Apply

4. A controversy arises in your congregation. New pews must be purchased. Some members insist that the pews must come with kneelers so that worshipers can kneel for the confession of sins and the absolution. Other members insist that this is not necessary. In what way will the words of this lesson be of help in dealing with this problem?

Jesus dealt with the hypocrisy of those who replaced God’s law with man-made traditions.

Mark 7:24–37

Learn from unlikely sources

Look

Verse 27 “Children”—A reference to the Jews. See also Romans 1:16 and Acts 1:8.

“Dogs”—Refers to the Gentiles. The word Jesus used for *dogs* is used to describe household pets, not the dogs that roamed the streets as scavengers.

Verse 31 Jesus took an unusual route (from Tyre to Decapolis). It appears that he was avoiding Galilee at that time. Perhaps this was because the crowds of people were seeking him as a miracle worker rather than as the Messiah.

Discuss

1. Why did Jesus say what he said to the woman? Consider who the woman was. How could the woman find any hope in his answer to her?
2. What can we learn from the woman’s reply to Jesus?
3. In healing the deaf mute, what was the significance of Jesus’ unusual gestures?
4. Why did Jesus command the people not to say who he was?

Apply

5. You are ministering to an elderly man in a nursing home. You notice that the man is facing several problems. You offer to pray with him. He answers, “It won’t do any good. I am not a member of a church; I never went to church; I have never prayed; and I never gave anything to the church. God won’t help me.” How could the words of this section of Mark be helpful?

Jesus traveled beyond Galilee and healed a gentile woman’s daughter and a deaf mute.

Mark 8:1–30

Open my eyes that I may see

Discuss

1. Jesus had just fed four thousand people. Why did the Pharisees then ask for “a sign from heaven” as proof that he was the Messiah?
2. How did Jesus answer the Pharisees request? Also see Matthew 16:4, 6.
3. In this context, can you define the “leaven of the Pharisees”?
4. Why did Jesus tell the blind man whom he had healed not to go into the village? Why do you think he took the man outside the city in the first place?
5. The people had various opinions about who Jesus was. Most did not understand the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah or his kingdom. Because of the humble way he acted, the people did not consider him to be the Son of God. Nevertheless, some saw the matter clearly. Whom did Peter confess Jesus to be?

Apply

6. Agree or disagree. The Old Testament religion given to the Israelites by Moses is no longer in existence today. Therefore we don't really need to worry about the leaven of the Pharisees.
7. How does the account of the feeding of the four thousand people help us in seemingly impossible situations?

Jesus opened the eyes of his disciples to understand and avoid the leaven of Pharisees and Herodians. Jesus healed a blind man. Peter confessed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

Mark 8:31–9:13

The suffering and glory of the Messiah

Look

- 9:2 *“Transfigured”*—The glory of Jesus’ divinity radiated through his human body, casting an aura of brilliant, white light.
- 9:4 *“Elijah with Moses . . . talking with Jesus”*—They were the two great representatives of the Old Testament: Elijah was the greatest of God’s prophets and Moses was God’s great law-giver. They were talking with Jesus “of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31).
- 9:11 *“First Elijah must come?”* This was John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah. See Malachi 3:1; 4:5–6, and Matthew 11:14.

Discuss

1. What did the disciples learn about what would happen to Jesus in the near future?
2. Consider Peter’s actions at this time. What did he miss in Jesus’ prophecy?
3. Why did Jesus call Peter Satan?
4. Consider Jesus’ response to Peter in verses 34–38. After you have done this, evaluate who was Peter’s real concern.
5. What was Peter’s motivation in asking permission to make three tents?
6. How did the transfiguration strengthen Jesus during the last weeks of his life?

Apply

7. Why must we too leave the Mount of Transfiguration and accompany Jesus back down?

Jesus predicted his sufferings and death. He showed his glory to the disciples and was strengthened for his sufferings and death.

Mark 9:14–32

Jesus has power over evil spirits

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1676–1677)

Look

- Verses 17–18 Demon possession could take many forms in its victims' lives. (See Acts 16:16–18.) Here its victim suffered loss of speech and violent convulsions and seizures.
- Verse 19 *"O faithless generation"*—These words were directed to Jesus' disciples for their slowness to believe and their failure to cast out the demon. (Remember, they had already been called as apostles and given power to drive out demons [3:14–15]. They may have already gone out on their first preaching journey.) The disciples may have tried to drive out the demon and at their initial failure given up all hope. They ceased believing that Jesus would help them.
- Verse 31 *"For he was teaching his disciples"*—Here is one reason why Jesus did not want people to know about his miracles. Jesus needed time to train his disciples. He had compassion on the crowds, but he also saw future crowds who would need to hear about the kingdom of God from his disciples.
- Verse 32 *"But they did not understand."* Even though this was not the first time Jesus spoke about his suffering, death, and resurrection, the disciples did not understand. Without God's enlightening Spirit, human beings cannot understand even the clear words of Scripture.

Discuss

1. From everything Jesus says, why were the disciples unable to cast out this demon?
2. How did Jesus help and encourage the boy's father in his faith? How was this shown in his second prayer?
3. How did the evil spirit react to Jesus' command to come out? What would be the reason for such a reaction?

Apply

4. In the midst of a great tragedy or trauma, we might find ourselves in such a weak spiritual condition that we are unable to believe that the Lord will help us. How do the words of this boy's father help us?

Jesus cast out a demon that his disciples were unable to cast out and warned against unbelief.

Mark 9:33–50

Look

- Verse 39 *“In my name”*—The man driving out demons was clearly a believer; he was just not one of Jesus’ disciples. (See Matthew 7:21–23 for an example of people who performed miracles but did not believe in Jesus.)
- Verse 49 *“Salted with fire”*—Salt had to be added to Old Testament sacrifices to make them pleasing to God (Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19). The disciples would be salted too. The sufferings they would endure would make them pleasing sacrifices to the Lord. If the disciples had salt in themselves (here a symbol of purification), they would be able to resolve strife and restore peace when they recognized their role of serving one another with the Word.

Discuss

1. The kingdom of God is different from the kingdoms of the world. The world’s leaders argue and jostle for positions of importance. What makes a person important in God’s kingdom? Why do you think this is so?
2. What example of service does Jesus give us in verse 37?
3. Jesus teaches the disciples never to look down on the work of a true believer who serves God. What comfort can they take in the days ahead when they are criticized for serving the Lord?
4. How serious is Jesus about sin? See what he says in verses 42–48.

Apply

5. What is the best way for you personally to become the “greatest” member of your church?

Jesus taught his disciples about greatness. Greatness is bound up in service, in putting away sin, and in being purified so that we live at peace with one another.

Mark 10:1–31

A childlike faith or trust in riches?

Look

Verse 18 *“No one is good except God alone.”* Jesus was not implying that he was not true God. He was speaking to a person who thought he, Jesus, was just one good man among many. No human being is good, Jesus said, and no human being has the ability to set down laws. Only God can do that.

Discuss

1. Why did some Pharisees bring up the issue of divorce? Jesus explained why Moses allowed the people of his day to get divorces. What was that?
2. According to the New Testament, when are divorces permitted? See Matthew 5:32 and 1 Corinthians 7:15.
3. What is the basic principle we need to keep in mind about marriage? (verses 5–9)
4. Why are little children good examples of people who have received the kingdom of heaven in a God-pleasing way?
5. Why did Jesus cite the admonition of verse 21 to this self-righteous man rather than the good news of God’s forgiveness in Jesus?

Apply

6. On our own, it is impossible to give ourselves completely to Jesus. Yet by God’s grace we do just that. What do we receive in return?

Jesus taught about divorce and related how people in God’s kingdom think of marriage. He praised the simple faith of little children. He pointed out the rich young man’s basic sin, love for the things of the world more than love for God.

Mark 10:32–52

True greatness in God's kingdom

Look

Verse 38 *"Are you able . . . to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"* Jesus was speaking of the suffering, ridicule, offense, and death he would soon have to endure.

Discuss

1. Why were the disciples astonished that Jesus would go up to Jerusalem? Why were his other followers afraid?
2. Jesus clearly explained to his disciples why he must go to Jerusalem. He had explained this before, but now he added more details. What did he add?
3. Why did Jesus say James and John did not know what they were talking about?
4. How is Christian ministry to be different from the way the world conducts its business?
5. Look at the blind man's first four words (verse 47). Why is this a great statement of faith?

Apply

6. A member of your congregation complains that the church is behind the times. He states that the church ought to adopt the ways of the business world. In what way might this be true? How do the words of Jesus (verses 41–45) call us to be very careful in this area of life?

Jesus repeated the prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection and cautioned his disciples about their desire for worldly greatness.

Mark 11:1–19

Jesus enters Jerusalem

Look

- Verse 2 *“Colt”*—Matthew, the eyewitness, reminds us that there were two donkeys present: the donkey and its foal (Matthew 21:2). Jesus rode on the foal, “on which no one has ever yet sat” (Luke 19:30). This fulfilled Zechariah 9:9.
- Verse 8 *“Many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches.”* This was often done for approaching royalty. The people gave up something for their king, to make his ride into the city as smooth and comfortable as possible.
- Verse 9 *“Hosanna!”*—Literally, “Save us.” The people were quoting Psalm 118:24–25.
- Verse 11 *“Bethany”*—During this week, Jesus stayed with Mary and Martha in Bethany.

Discuss

1. This account illustrates Jesus’ complete power and complete humility at the same time. How does it show Jesus’ power? How does it show Jesus’ humility?
2. What must have been going on in the disciples’ minds as they watched Jesus enter Jerusalem?
3. After reading the words of praise offered by the crowd, examine carefully their meaning. Just what were these people saying to Jesus and about him?
4. Why did Jesus drive the money changers from the temple?

Apply

5. Many observers of our time in history have called this the post-Christian era. Such a designation implies that the power of Christianity has come and gone. How do the events of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem remind us that the power of our Lord is still present?

Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem amidst the praise of the crowds.

Mark 11:20–33

Jesus withers the fruitless religion

Look

Verse 13 *“Not the season for figs”*—Recall these words from the previous lesson. The fig tree had leaves, which would give one reason to expect it to bear fruit. Perhaps Jesus was looking for the early ripe figs that ripen before the main crop. In any case, the fig tree would serve as a good illustration for the fruitlessness of legalistic religions.

Discuss

1. Return to verses 12–14. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? How did this leafy tree symbolize the Jewish religion and its leaders at this time? See Jeremiah 8:13 and Micah 7:1.
2. Jesus promised his disciples that they would be able to do the same thing in their ministry. How would the disciples (and the Christian church) wither fruitless trees?
3. How does Jesus make the religious leaders reveal their unbelief? (verses 27–33)
4. Jesus had once said, “From the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” (Matthew 13:12). How did this saying come true in the case of the religious leaders?

Apply

5. In the verses of our study we see a very bold Jesus. He did not shrink from the truth, even when he knew he was in great danger. How do these verses inspire us to be bold in the confession of the truth of Christianity?

Jesus cleansed the temple, cursed the fig tree, and dealt with questions about his authority.

Mark 12:1–27

Jesus rebukes the Jewish religious leaders

Look

Verse 18 *“Sadducees”*—They were the party that represented the aristocracy among the Jews. Although they were small in number, they had great political power. They accepted only the five books of Moses and denied life after death, the resurrection, angels, and demons.

Discuss

1. What is the main point of the parable of the tenants? (verses 1–9)
2. Identify the following words in the prophecy. How would this prophecy soon be fulfilled?
 - the stone
 - the builders
 - those who consider what God has done to be marvelous
3. How did the Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Jesus regarding Roman taxes? What answer did Jesus give them?
4. How did the Sadducees mock Jesus with their question?
5. Jesus says that the Sadducees are in error on two accounts. Which are they?

Apply

6. One of your coworkers notices how committed you are to the Lord and your church. He also notices that you are uneasy about the teachings and practices of other churches. He asks, “How come you are so uneasy about what other churches do and believe?” How will this study aid you in your answer?

Jesus began to challenge the religious leaders. He put them to shame with his wisdom.

Mark 12:28–44

Jesus continues to teach and refute the Jewish leaders

Look

Verse 34 *“Not far from the kingdom of God”*—The man had shown a true understanding of the nature of Moses’ laws. If he would have really come to faith in Jesus as his Savior, he would also have become a member of God’s kingdom of grace.

Discuss

1. The teacher of the law asked Jesus a question about Moses’ law. Notice that Jesus answered this man without any rebuke or censure. It is clear the man was sincere, unlike those who had asked him the previous question. How did Jesus answer him? Why could the expert in the law never have come to this conclusion on his own?
2. After Jesus answered the teacher of the law, he went on the offensive. The Jewish leaders had committed a serious error in their debate about the Messiah. They called him the “son of David” but no more. To them, he was a human king. As such, he would be under the law and, therefore, would be simply part of their religious structure and authority. How did Jesus correct this false understanding? What do you think Jesus wanted to accomplish?
3. What is the result of trying to bring Jesus down to our level? (verses 38–40)
4. How did the poor widow put into the treasury more than the rich people did?

Apply

5. Jesus spoke of loving the Lord with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength. Look at each area and state how Christians today can love the Lord more with that part of their being.
6. As a corollary to the widow’s offering, you might want to read 1 Chronicles 29:1–9. Here we see the giving practices of a wealthy man. What lesson is there for you in this?

Jesus continued to teach the religious leaders. He praised the poor woman’s great gift.

Mark 13:1–13

The Lord's judgment on unbelief—part 1

Look

The judgment on Jerusalem is a picture of God's judgment on the world. The end of God's grace on his people as a nation came in AD 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem. The end of God's time of grace for the world will come when he returns to judge all people. Jesus links the two together, moving from one to the next without making any special comments. Some verses clearly refer to the first event, and some clearly refer to the second. Some apply to both. Jesus' purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity for detail about the end of the world but to keep us watching for his second coming by giving us signs found in the history of the world.

Discuss

1. What two events are interwoven in the discussion in verses 1–4?
2. Focus on each of the events leading up to the Last Day. Are these events taking place now?
 - false Christs
 - wars/rumors of wars
 - earthquakes/famines
 - persecution of the church
 - the gospel preached in all the world
3. Mark quotes many things Jesus said in the same form Matthew quotes them. However, Mark focuses more on the specifics of Christian persecution—that they would be betrayed by family members, be called to stand before government courts, and be hated. Why might Mark have included these elements of Jesus' answer?
4. How do the following statements help us understand why Jesus gives us these signs?
 - “See that no one leads you astray.”
 - “Do not be alarmed.”
 - “This must take place.”
 - “These are but the beginning of the birth pains.”
 - “The one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Jesus listed the signs leading up to God's judgment. He reminds us to watch.

Mark 13:14–37

The Lord's judgment on unbelief—part 2

Look

Verse 14 *"The abomination of desolation"*—This phrase is found in the book of Daniel (9:27). Daniel predicted the events leading up to God's judgment. In AD 70, the Roman general Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem and in the process "desolated" the temple. The "unclean" gentile Romans were the "abomination." This prophecy, however, was not exhausted by the events of AD 70. On the basis of Scripture (2 Thessalonians 2:3–11), it is clear that the Roman Catholic papacy also fulfills Jesus' prophecy. The papacy condemns those who teach that a person is saved solely by grace through faith in Jesus' substitutionary death, and it claims sole authority as Christ's vicar on earth to interpret Scripture through the filter of church councils and papal decrees. Sitting in the holy place (the external church of God), the pope's abominable decrees desecrate it.

Discuss

1. Jesus' words in verses 14–23 apply more directly to the destruction of Jerusalem but also picture judgment day. Study this section by looking at each of these phrases. What does each one mean for us today?
 - "When you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be."
 - "Flee."
 - "In those days there will be such tribulation."
 - "But for the sake of the elect . . . he shortened the days."
 - "False christs and false prophets will arise."
2. Describe Jesus' second coming.
3. What is the main point of verses 24–37? (This is why Jesus tells about the last days.)

Jesus described the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world in similar terms. There will be terrible times, but they will be cut short. Then Jesus will appear suddenly in the sky.

Mark 14:1–26

Jesus prepares for his last hours; the Lord's Supper

Look

- Verse 1 *"The Feast of Unleavened Bread"*—This feast began on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar (Nisan, our March–April). For seven days, only unleavened bread was to be eaten.
- Verse 3 *"Ointment of pure nard, very costly"*—This is an aromatic oil with the fragrance derived from a root native to India.

Discuss

1. How did many of the guests and disciples respond to this anointing? Contrast the insight the woman had into why Jesus came to this earth with the insight the disciples had at this time.
2. While the woman was confessing her faith in Jesus' sacrifice for her, what was one of Jesus' disciples doing?
3. Verses 12–16 teach us how the Lord takes care of the needs we have as we go about doing his work. What comfort does this give us as we serve the Lord?
4. What unpleasant task did Jesus have to do before he could share his body and blood with his faithful believers?
5. Against the backdrop of the greatest betrayal of all time comes the greatest act of giving of all time. Look at these phrases and words. What do they tell you about the Lord's Supper?
 - "took bread"/"took a cup"
 - "gave it to them"
 - "my body"/"my blood"
 - "the covenant"
 - "poured out"

A woman anointed Jesus' body for burial. Jesus began to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples.

Mark 14:27–72

Jesus wins our salvation all alone

Discuss

1. What tremendous comfort was there in Jesus' words "I will go before you to Galilee"?
2. How did Jesus succeed in the Garden of Gethsemane?
3. How did the disciples fail Jesus in Gethsemane?
4. How did the disciples fail when Jesus was arrested?
5. How successful was the Sanhedrin's evidence against Jesus? How did Jesus help them along?
6. How did Peter fulfill Jesus' prophecy recorded in verses 27–31? What motivated him to deny Jesus? What was it that brought Peter to his senses?

Apply

7. Jesus said he would teach his disciples to be fishers of men. What do you think the disciples learned from how they treated Jesus during the last hours of his life?

Jesus prayed to his Father for strength. He was betrayed, arrested, deserted by his disciples, tried before the Sanhedrin, and disowned by Peter.

Mark 15:1–32

Jesus is condemned and crucified for us

Look

- Verse 1 The Sanhedrin had gathered at night. This was not acceptable under Jewish law. It was necessary that they meet after dawn to make their earlier decision legal.
- Verse 21 *“A passerby, Simon of Cyrene”*—No doubt he was a Jewish pilgrim from a city in North Africa and had come to celebrate the Passover.
- Verse 23 *“Wine mixed with myrrh”*—This was wine mixed with an anesthetic, meant to deaden pain in order to make the criminal easier to handle.
- Verse 25 *“Third hour”*—9:00 a.m. The sixth and ninth hours are also mentioned.

Discuss

1. The Jews had condemned Jesus because he claimed to be the Son of God. That answer “rang their bell.” Mark records only one short answer to a single question Pilate asked Jesus. What was that answer? Why did this ring Pilate’s bell?
2. Why would Pilate offer to release a man with Barabbas’ reputation? And what motivated the crowd to choose him over Jesus for a Passover release?
3. Why did the soldiers abuse Jesus? See Acts 3:13–17.
4. Why did Jesus first refuse the wine offered to him before being nailed to the cross and then later accept the wine?
5. What do you know about the act of crucifixion?
6. Jesus died for the sins of the world. What were people doing while he was dying for them?

Jesus was tried before Pontius Pilate and then crucified.

Mark 15:33–47

Jesus dies and is buried

Look

Verses 33–34 *“Sixth hour . . . ninth hour”*—This was from noon to three, the hours when the sun shines its brightest.

Discuss

1. The physical suffering Jesus endured was horrible. But the spiritual suffering he endured was even worse. Explain that thought on the basis of verse 34.
2. The disciples had deserted Jesus. No one was there to explain what was happening or to testify to the truth. Yet God had his witnesses. Explain the witness of the following:
 - the sun
 - the curtain of the temple
 - the centurion
3. When Jesus died, he gave a loud cry. From your knowledge of the nature of crucifixion, explain why this was so remarkable. What does this show us about Jesus' death?
4. Who alone stayed near Jesus in his final hours?
5. Read Isaiah 53:9. How was this prophecy fulfilled at Jesus' burial?

Apply

6. We are repeatedly confronted by people, and more than a few Christians among them, who refuse to take sin seriously. How might this study help them begin to take sin seriously and finally come to appreciate the message of forgiveness in Jesus Christ?

Jesus was crucified; he died and was buried.

Mark 16

He is risen!

Look

- Verse 1 The women mentioned in this verse came to finish preparing the body for burial, since the arrival of the Sabbath (sunset on Friday) had not allowed them time to complete this labor of love.
- Verse 12 *“Two of them”*—This is a reference to the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13 and following).
- Verse 18 *“They will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.”* This passage does not endorse the handling of snakes but makes reference to God’s protective care of his disciples when they were in danger. For example, see Acts 28:3–5.

Discuss

1. Why were the women concerned about the stone that sealed the tomb? What does this tell us about their expectations on that morning?
2. What task did the angel give these women?
3. Early church writers say that Peter served in Rome, where he was martyred, and that John Mark worked there with him. Why might Mark have chosen to record the special note of the angel that the women should tell “Peter” in particular about Jesus’ resurrection?
4. How did the disciples receive the good news that the women and the Emmaus disciples brought them? Why did they respond in this way?

Apply

5. When the disciples finally believed in Jesus as the resurrected Lord, their lives changed dramatically. Has this truth affected you in the same way? Explain why or why not.

Jesus, the resurrected Lord, instructed his disciples and ascended into heaven.