

# SPOTLIGHT ON MARK

KEY  
CONCEPTS

> Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, who exercised extraordinary authority to overcome the forces of Satan, sin and disease.

> The Messiah came not to conquer the Roman legions, but to suffer and die and to pay the ransom for sins.

## ABOUT

Mark's action-packed Gospel was written at a time when allegiance to Jesus could cost one everything: family, friends, possessions and even life itself. In the context of growing opposition from the Roman government and from society in general, Mark called God's people to follow the example of Jesus, who remained faithful to God no matter what the cost.

Whereas the Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with stories of Jesus' birth, Mark jumps right to the ministry of John the Baptist (see Mk 1:1–8). Jesus' mission began with his baptism and temptation (see Mk 1:9–13), followed by a powerful preaching and healing ministry throughout Galilee (see Mk 1:14–8:30). The Galilean ministry climaxed with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, God's promised deliverer (see Mk 8:27–29). From that point on, Jesus began teaching his disciples that he must suffer and die in Jerusalem to pay the ransom price for sins. The rest of the Gospel describes Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and his passion there as the Suffering Servant of the Lord.

A pattern of "threes" runs through the Gospel, starting with three boat scenes illustrating the disciples' incomprehension (see Mk 4:35–41; 6:45–52; 8:14–21). There are three cycles on pride and servant leadership (see Mk 8:31–38; 9:31–37; 10:32–45), three calls for readiness in the Olivet Discourse (see Mk 13:33,35,37), Jesus three times found his disciples sleeping in Gethsemane (see Mk 14:37,40,41), and Peter denied Christ three times (see Mk 14:68,70,71). Even the crucifixion had three three-hour intervals (see Mk 15:25,33,34).

Mark wrote for at least three reasons: (1) to provide the church with an authoritative written

account of the gospel story, (2) to confirm Jesus' identity as the suffering Messiah and Son of God, and (3) to encourage believers to cross-bearing discipleship—to persevere through trials and suffering as Jesus did.

According to church tradition, Mark gathered the information about Jesus from Peter's preaching. He then wrote his Gospel either while Peter was ministering in Rome or sometime later, after Peter's death (in the late AD 60s).

## KEY VERSES

**Mark 1:7:** After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

**Mark 3:35:** Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

**Mark 6:56:** Wherever he went ... they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

**Mark 9:7:** A voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

**Mark 10:14–15:** Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

**Mark 14:7–9:** The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.

**KEY TEACHINGS**

- > Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
- > Jesus is the Suffering Servant described in Isaiah 53.
- > True disciples of Jesus are to take up their cross and follow Christ through sacrifice and suffering.

**KEY TERMS**

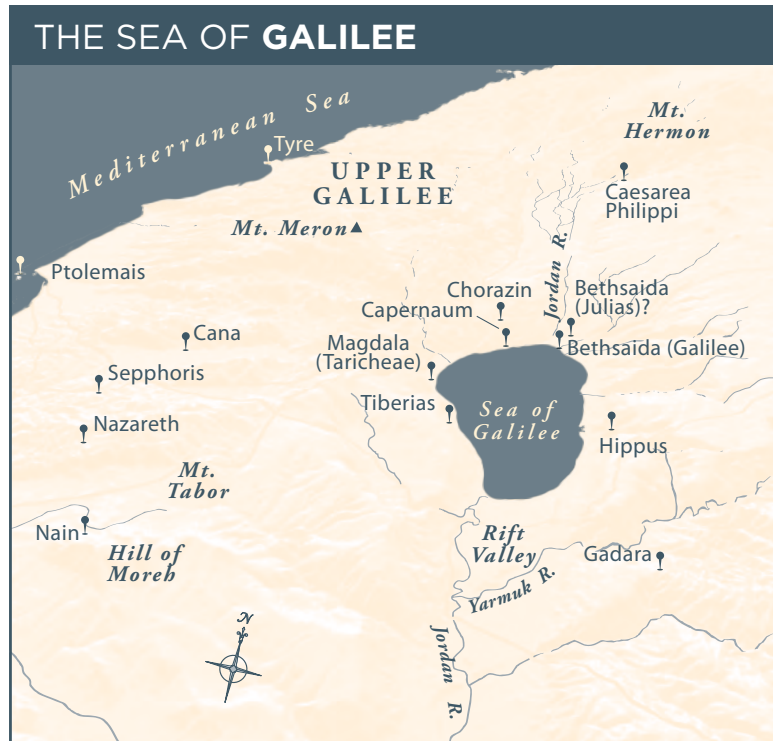
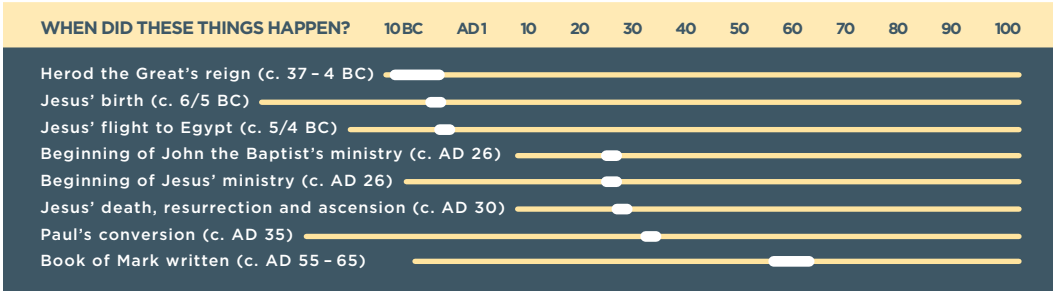
**Disciple** — One of the twelve in Jesus' inner circle who followed Christ during his ministry on earth and worked to spread his message.

**Gospel** — The Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

**Kingdom of God** — While God is and has always been king of the universe, Jesus announced that God's end-time salvation — his sovereign kingdom — had arrived through Jesus' words and deeds.

**PEOPLE TO KNOW**

**James** (p. 1296)



# MARK

## John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1:2-8pp — Mt 3:1-11; Lk 3:2-16

**1** The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,<sup>a</sup> the Son of God,<sup>b</sup> <sup>2</sup>as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way”<sup>c</sup> —

<sup>3</sup>“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>4</sup>And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with<sup>e</sup> water, but he will baptize you with<sup>e</sup> the Holy Spirit.”

## The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

1:9-11pp — Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21,22

1:12,13pp — Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13

<sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee

**1:1** *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah.* Writing three decades after the resurrection of Christ, Mark starts his narrative with a simple declaration of the Good News about God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The *good news* refers to the basic story found in Christ’s life, ministry, death and resurrection. **1:2-3** *as it is written.* Other than by quoting Jesus, Mark makes only one reference to the Old Testament. **1:4** *John ... preaching a baptism.* The mention of John without any introduction presupposes some knowledge of the Christian faith on the part of Mark’s readers. *the forgiveness of sins.* This phrase does not mean that one is baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins. The Greek preposition translated *of* in English probably means “with a view to,” signifying that baptism looks to the forgiveness that God gives through the gift of repentance. **1:5** *were baptized by him.* John’s baptizing was a recurring popular event that attracted large crowds. Mark vividly portrays the continuous stream of followers who flocked to John. As each person was baptized by John, they would admit to their individual sin and need for the Messiah. **1:7** *And this was his message.* The tense of these verbs indicates continuous action in past time. John’s

and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

<sup>12</sup>At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, <sup>13</sup>and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted<sup>f</sup> by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

## Jesus Announces the Good News

1:16-20pp — Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:2-11; Jn 1:35-42

<sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup>“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

## Jesus Calls His First Disciples

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” <sup>18</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>a</sup>1 Or *Jesus Christ. Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) both mean *Anointed One*. <sup>b</sup>1 Some manuscripts do not have *the Son of God*. <sup>c</sup>2 Mal. 3:1 <sup>d</sup>3 Isaiah 40:3 <sup>e</sup>8 Or *in* <sup>f</sup>13 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*.

characteristic message was to promote expectancy and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1:8** *I baptize you with water.* The water is a physical representation of the future life in the Spirit that people who followed the Messiah would have.

**1:9** *Jesus ... was baptized by John.* Because he had no sins to repent of, Jesus’ baptism was unique. It showed his identity with John’s work and with the sinners for whom he would die. It also foreshadowed his own death, burial and resurrection for sinners.

**1:11** *a voice came from heaven.* Three times during Christ’s earthly ministry a voice came from heaven. Here it was the Father’s testimony to Christ’s unique and divine Sonship. The other two confirming incidents were at the transfiguration (9:7) and on the day of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12:28).

**1:13** *angels attended him.* Mark is the only Gospel that mentions these angels.

**1:15** *kingdom of God.* The kingdom was the subject of much Old Testament prophecy, and the theme was familiar to Jesus’ listeners. *Repent and believe.* These are both acts of faith. When a person accepts the only true and worthy object of faith, that person readily turns from inferior substitutes.

PEOPLES,  
LANDS AND  
RULERSCULTURE  
AND  
HISTORY

ARCHAEOLOGY

ANCIENT  
TEXTS AND  
ARTIFACTS

RELIABILITY

CONTEXT NOTES

## NAZARETH (Mk 1)

The town of Nazareth (Map 9) is located north of the Jezreel Valley in the hills of lower Galilee, approximately 3 miles (4.8 km) south of Sepphoris. While Sepphoris was an opulent Greco-Roman city during Jesus' youth and functioned as the capital of Galilee until AD 20, Nazareth remained in relative obscurity.<sup>1</sup> Nazareth occupied about 60 acres, with a population of only about 500. In his writings Josephus named some 45 Galilean towns but never once mentioned Nazareth, and neither does the Talmud, which names 63 other Galilean sites. The insignificance of Nazareth provoked disparaging comments in Jesus' day, such as Nathanael's retort: "Can anything good come from [Nazareth]?" (Jn 1:46).

Nevertheless, the New Testament explicitly identifies Jesus as "the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (Mt 21:11). This humble town was the residence of Mary and Joseph (see Lk 2:39) and the place where Jesus grew up (see Mt 2:23; Lk 4:16). It was also the jumping-off point for his public ministry (see Mk 1:9) and the site of his first rejection (see Lk 4:16–30). He is frequently referred to in the Gospel narratives simply as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mk 1:24; Lk 18:37), and the *titulus* (official placard) that Pilate affixed to the cross dubbed him "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Jn 19:19). Even his earliest followers were labeled "the Nazarene sect" (Ac 24:5).

Both Matthew and John, however, connected the origin of Jesus from Nazareth with an important precedent in the Bible. Matthew 2:23 states that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy, "He would be called a Nazarene." What was Matthew referring to? No Old Testament text contains those specific words, and Matthew did not indicate the source of his reference. Some have conjectured that he was alluding to Isaiah 11:1, in which the Messiah is called a "Branch" (the Hebrew word for branch, *netzer*, sounds similar to Nazareth). Others have proposed that Matthew was referring to the concept of the Nazirite, a person consecrated to God's service (see Nu 6:1–21; Jdg 13). But John also linked his first mention of Jesus' origins in Nazareth to his assertion that Jesus was the fulfillment of what Moses and the prophets had written (see Jn 1:45). John did not claim that Jesus' coming from Nazareth in and of itself fulfilled Scripture, but he did report Nathanael's astonishment at the idea that the Messiah could have hailed from such a little-known hometown (see Jn 1:46).

Archaeological excavations conducted beneath the Church of the Annunciation have revealed that ancient Nazareth was an agricultural village. Excavations have also uncovered a number of Jewish tombs, including four that were sealed with rolling stones, typical of tombs used up until AD 70 and similar to the one in which Jesus was laid.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a third-century AD Jewish-Christian synagogue was discovered there. Oriented toward Jerusalem, it contained Jewish-Christian iconography within its mosaic floor. The synagogue that Jesus attended as a young man and in which he first proclaimed his Messianic identity (see Lk 4) probably stood beneath this later structure.<sup>3</sup> The present-day Basilica of the Annunciation at Nazareth was dedicated in 1969 and represents the largest Christian church structure in the Middle East.

<sup>1</sup>See "Galilee in Jesus' Time" on p. 1245.

<sup>2</sup>See "Jewish Burial Practices" on p. 1322.

<sup>3</sup>See "Ancient Synagogues" on p. 1430.

**19**When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. **20**Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**1:19 James ... John.** The scenes of verses 16–20 are very colorful. Simon and Andrew are fishing when we encounter them. James and John are mending their nets. Such details indicate the testimony of an eyewitness, probably Peter.

### Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit

1:21–28pp — Lk 4:31–37

**21**They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to

**1:21 Capernaum.** This city is now in ruins and sits beside the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. It is mentioned 22 times in the Gospels. By contrast, only one recorded event during Christ's ministry occurred at Nazareth (Lk 4:16).

## Q&amp;A

**WHY DO DETAILS SOMETIMES DIFFER FROM ONE GOSPEL ACCOUNT TO ANOTHER?** (Mk 1:12–13)

Mark omitted many details that Matthew and Luke included in their accounts of Jesus' temptation. Just as various witnesses have individual perspectives on an event, the Gospel writers drew on their own backgrounds and wrote from their own viewpoints and for their particular audiences.

Of greater concern than the amount of coverage are the apparent discrepancies in the accounts themselves. For instance, Matthew and Luke seem to have rearranged the sequence of events surrounding Jesus' temptation by Satan. Matthew wrote that Jesus was tempted to (1) turn stones into bread, (2) leap from the temple and (3) worship the devil so all the kingdoms of the world would be given to him. Luke changed the order of the second and third temptations.

But it's important to note that ancient cultures did not feel compelled to relate events in chronological sequence. Some think Matthew may have listed the temptations in chronological order, while Luke listed them in order of significance. Though the details vary according to individual Gospel writers, the essence of the information is consistent. There is no real contradiction between the Gospel accounts.



teach. <sup>22</sup>The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. <sup>23</sup>Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup>“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!”

<sup>25</sup>“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” <sup>26</sup>The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

<sup>27</sup>The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching — and with

**1:22 the people were amazed at his teaching.** Christ's teaching differed from that of teachers of the law and Pharisees because he did not lean on the wisdom of other teachers and rabbis. His authority came from himself.

**1:28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.** Mark notes the extent of recognition this great miracle brought Jesus. He also creates suspense by contrasting the people who received Christ with the Pharisees and rulers who worked to bring about his death.

**1:35 where he prayed.** The verb tense indicates Jesus

authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup>News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

**Jesus Heals Many**

1:29–31pp — Mt 8:14,15; Lk 4:38,39

1:32–34pp — Mt 8:16,17; Lk 4:40,41

<sup>29</sup>As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup>Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup>So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup>That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup>The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup>and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

**Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place**

1:35–38pp — Lk 4:42,43

<sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup>and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

<sup>38</sup>Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” <sup>39</sup>So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

**Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy**

1:40–44pp — Mt 8:2–4; Lk 5:12–14

<sup>40</sup>A man with leprosy<sup>a</sup> came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

<sup>41</sup>Jesus was indignant.<sup>b</sup> He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” <sup>42</sup>Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

<sup>43</sup>Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: <sup>44</sup>“See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go,

<sup>a</sup> 40 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin. <sup>b</sup> 41 Many manuscripts *Jesus was filled with compassion*

prayed continuously. Jesus' prayer life was successful because it was planned, private and prolonged. He got up early enough, got far enough away and stayed at it long enough.

**1:44 don't tell this to anyone.** Jesus' demand has several plausible explanations: (1) The report of Jesus' healing the man may have prejudiced the priest who needed to pronounce him clean; (2) Jesus did not want to be known primarily as a miracle worker, so he often commanded those who received his healing to remain quiet; and (3) the man's testimony would possibly have

show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”<sup>45</sup> Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

### Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man 2:3-12pp — Mt 9:2-8; Lk 5:18-26

**2** A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. <sup>2</sup>They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup>Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup>Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>6</sup>Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, <sup>7</sup>“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

<sup>8</sup>Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ <sup>10</sup>But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, <sup>11</sup>“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>12</sup>He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

### Jesus Calls Levi and Eats With Sinners 2:14-17pp — Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32

<sup>13</sup>Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. <sup>14</sup>As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

<sup>15</sup>While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup>When the teachers of the law who were

hastened the confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

**2:5 saw their faith.** Not only did the four men have faith, but the paralyzed man himself had it too. When Jesus announced to him, “your sins are forgiven you,” he was implicitly acknowledging the paralyzed man’s trust that he was the Messiah.

**2:6-7 some teachers of the law.** Mark notes the opposition of the teachers of the law, who under their breath accused Jesus of blasphemy.

## Q&A

### WHY DID JESUS CALL HIMSELF “THE SON OF MAN”? (MK 2:10)

Jesus revealed and concealed himself by using the somewhat mysterious phrase “Son of Man.” Jesus was clearly human, but he was divine as well. His ministry progressively revealed this fact. To those who would oppose him, he chose to conceal his identity. To those who would accept him as the Messiah destined to give his life for humanity, the term revealed his identity.

“Son of Man” is used 14 times in Mark and was Jesus’ favorite term for himself. It describes the servant role he willingly assumed. Sometimes the term is used to describe his divine authority, his sacrificial role and his future glory when he returns. By taking on this title in Mark 13:26 and 14:62, Jesus established himself as the fulfillment of the heavenly authority figure of Daniel 7:13-14, the one who is granted the right to come to earth to rule and judge on behalf of God.

The term blends the heavenly and earthly aspects of the Messiah. Because of his divine nature, God granted authority to Jesus to forgive sin. Because of his earthly mission to be a ransom for many, he suffered and was rejected, betrayed and killed—and then rose again.

While others may not have immediately grasped what Jesus meant by this title, Jesus used it to claim authority, demonstrate power and assume responsibilities no other man could.

Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

<sup>17</sup>On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

### Jesus Questioned About Fasting 2:18-22pp — Mt 9:14-17; Lk 5:33-38

<sup>18</sup>Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is

**2:11 get up, take your mat and go home.** By healing the paralyzed man, Jesus made his pronouncement of forgiveness far more credible.

**2:13 he began to teach them.** Jesus regularly taught the multitudes in retreat settings. This is indicated by the continuous tense of the verbs used here. The people kept on coming and Jesus kept on teaching.

**2:18 fasting.** Jesus was not against fasting if properly observed. He gave guidelines for fasting in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:16-18). Here, the Pharisees’ fasting,

it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. <sup>20</sup>But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

<sup>21</sup>"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. <sup>22</sup>And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

### Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

2:23-28pp — Mt 12:1-8; Lk 6:1-5  
3:1-6pp — Mt 12:9-14; Lk 6:6-11

<sup>23</sup>One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

<sup>25</sup>He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup>In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

<sup>27</sup>Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

### Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

**3** Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. <sup>2</sup>Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. <sup>3</sup>Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

perhaps twice each week (Lk 18:12), is contrasted with Jesus feasting, probably at Levi's house.

**2:21-22 No one sews ... no one pours.** Mark records only four of Jesus' parables—two of which he includes here. The comparison implies that the newness of his message, and of the new covenant to follow, cannot fit into the old molds of Judaism. The Old Testament was preparation for the New Testament (Gal 3:19-25).

**2:24 what is unlawful on the Sabbath.** The point to the Pharisees' accusation against Jesus and his disciples was that they had performed work on the Sabbath, but this charge was dubious. The act of plucking grain should not be confused with Sabbath work condemned by the law (Ex 31:15). This incident is further proof of rising opposition to Jesus' ministry.

**3:5 He looked around at them in anger.** It is possible, as Paul exhorts, to be angry and not sin (Eph 4:26). Jesus demonstrated this righteous anger. He was grieved with sin but did not sin himself by retaliating or losing control of his emotions.

<sup>4</sup>Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

<sup>5</sup>He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. <sup>6</sup>Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

### Crowds Follow Jesus

3:7-12pp — Mt 12:15,16; Lk 6:17-19

<sup>7</sup>Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup>When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup>Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. <sup>10</sup>For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. <sup>11</sup>Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup>But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

### Jesus Appoints the Twelve

3:16-19pp — Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:14-16; Ac 1:13

<sup>13</sup>Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup>He appointed twelve<sup>a</sup> that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup>and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup>These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup>James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), <sup>18</sup>Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup>and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>a</sup> 14 Some manuscripts *twelve* — designating them apostles —

**3:6 Herodians.** The Pharisees were religious experts who should have led the people in righteousness. Instead they plotted Jesus' death with the Herodians, their bitter enemies. They were willing to set aside differences to destroy a common foe. The Herodians were Jews who supported Rome and the Herods in particular. Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee during the same time that Pilate served as Roman governor over Judea and Samaria.

**3:11-12 he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.** Jesus rebuked the demons who proclaimed "You are the Son of God." This was not because the demons incorrectly identified Jesus but because their testimony was untrustworthy.

**3:16-19 gave the name Peter.** Jesus gave Peter a new name because it was the Jewish custom to rename someone who had experienced a life-changing event. This renaming of the disciples has similarities to the renaming of Abram (Ge 17:3-5) and of Saul (Ac 9).

## Jesus Accused by His Family and by Teachers of the Law

3:23-27pp — Mt 12:25-29; Lk 11:17-22  
3:31-35pp — Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21

<sup>20</sup>Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family<sup>a</sup> heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

<sup>22</sup>And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

<sup>23</sup>So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup>In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, <sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

<sup>30</sup>He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

<sup>33</sup>“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

<sup>34</sup>Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup>Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

## The Parable of the Sower

4:1-12pp — Mt 13:1-15; Lk 8:4-10  
4:13-20pp — Mt 13:18-23; Lk 8:11-15

**4** Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. <sup>2</sup>He taught them many things by parables,

Mark 3:22-30

## DEMONS ARE SATAN’S PARTNERS

Demons are evil supernatural beings ruled by Satan. Throughout the Gospels and Acts you can see these unclean spirits inflicting people with terrible harm including deafness and muteness (see Mk 9:25), blindness (see Mt 12:22), and physical deformities (see Lk 13:10-13). Demons caused uncontrollable behaviors (see Mk 1:23-24; Lk 9:37-39) and mental problems (see Mt 8:28). While blaming demons for these afflictions might seem like nothing more than ancient ignorance, Jesus distinguished between affliction by demons and various sicknesses (see Mt 4:24). Some Bible scholars today think demons are fallen angels (see 2Pe 2:4), but not all scholars agree with that view. However demons originated, Jesus could free people from their power with a simple command (see Mk 1:25; 9:25), proving his dominance over Satan and all his evil forces. Jesus also gave his disciples authority to use his name to break demonic oppression (see Lk 10:17).

## BIBLE TRUTHS

### THINK:

Do you see evidence of Satan’s work in the world today? Where and how?

and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup>“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate

<sup>a</sup> 21 Or his associates

**3:27 strong man’s house.** Whoever defeats Satan must be stronger than he. Jesus implies that he himself has come to enter the house of the strong man, Satan, to seize his goods (1Jn 3:8).

**3:28-30 whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit.** Such people place themselves outside the redeeming grace of God. It is apparently not a single act of defiant behavior but a continued state of opposition entered into willingly. The tense of “they were saying” indicates a continued action, not a one-time event. The words and works of Christ were spoken and performed by the power of the Holy Spirit. To attribute them to Satan is to call the work of heaven a work of hell. For such

perverse belief there is no remedy. How someone can commit this sin today is a difficult question to answer, but those who persist in denigrating Christ by insulting his work or by attributing it to Satan may drive themselves past a point of no return (Mt 12:31-32).

**3:31 Jesus’ mother and brothers.** Opposition arose from Jesus’ own immediate family. We are not told precisely what they wanted to say, but it likely involved a concern for Jesus’ safety or reputation, since he was becoming widely known as a preaching prophet and a worker of miracles.

**4:3-8 A farmer went out to sow.** The point of the parable is that the condition of the soil determines the

it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

<sup>10</sup>When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup>He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup>so that,

“they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”<sup>a</sup>”

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup>The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup>Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup>Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup>Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup>but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop — some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

### A Lamp on a Stand

<sup>21</sup>He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on

potential for growth. The principle is true for Christians and non-Christians alike. Those who have become complacent and lackadaisical are not likely to receive the Word with benefit (Jas 1:2–25).

**4:11 *The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.*** In Scripture, a mystery is a truth God has revealed or will reveal at the proper time (Ro 16:25–26). Jesus apparently used parables for several reasons. First, they are interesting and grab the listener’s attention. Second, such stories are easily remembered. Third, they reveal truth to those who are ready spiritually to receive it. Fourth, they conceal truth from those who oppose Christ’s message. Frequently Jesus’ opponents failed to understand the lessons because of their own spiritual blindness (Mt 21:45–46).

**4:20 *hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop.*** Only one soil produces fruit. Such a person recognizes God’s call, determines to follow it and experiences a profound transformation.

**4:21–23 *a lamp.*** These were small clay vessels that

its stand? <sup>22</sup>For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. <sup>23</sup>If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.”

<sup>24</sup>“Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you — and even more. <sup>25</sup>Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

### The Parable of the Growing Seed

<sup>26</sup>He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup>Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup>As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

### The Parable of the Mustard Seed

4:30–32pp — Mt 13:31,32; Lk 13:18,19

<sup>30</sup>Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup>Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup>With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup>He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### Jesus Calms the Storm

4:35–41pp — Mt 8:18,23–27; Lk 8:22–25

<sup>35</sup>That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” <sup>36</sup>Leaving

<sup>a</sup> 12 Isaiah 6:9,10

burned a wick set in olive oil. Like the lamp, Jesus’ teachings reveal the motives of the human heart.

**4:26–29 *the kingdom of God is like.*** Plants develop in a complex, intricate process that humans still do not fully understand even two thousand years after Jesus spoke these words. Yet plants grow and bear fruit and seeds just the same. God’s kingdom likewise is growing, although we do not understand all that is happening. This parable, which appears only in Mark’s Gospel, presents God’s kingdom in brief, from first sowing to final reaping.

**4:35 *go over to the other side.*** The Sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide and twelve miles long. Its unique geography produces a greatly varying climate. It is 700 feet below sea level with mountains that rise 3,000–4,000 feet around it. It is not unusual for sudden windstorms to appear during the evening hours. The warm tropical air from the lake’s surface rises and meets the colder air from the nearby hills. The resulting turbulences and winds can be treacherous.

the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup>A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup>Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

<sup>39</sup>He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup>He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

<sup>41</sup>They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

### Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

5:1-17pp — Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-37  
5:18-20pp — Lk 8:38,39

**5** They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup>This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. <sup>4</sup>For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup>Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

<sup>6</sup>When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. <sup>7</sup>He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” <sup>8</sup>For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” <sup>10</sup>And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

<sup>11</sup>A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup>The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” <sup>13</sup>He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

<sup>14</sup>Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup>When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup>Those who

had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man — and told about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup>Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

<sup>18</sup>As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup>Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

<sup>a</sup> 1 Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*

## Q&A

### DO DEMONS STILL POSSESS PEOPLE TODAY? (Mk 5:1-18)

Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God and reclaim territory and people controlled by the devil. Jesus confronted demons (sometimes called “impure spirits”), establishing his authority over them. The New Testament is not reluctant to speak of the spirit world; it speaks of demons harassing, influencing and even possessing individuals.

The demon-possessed person can be violent (see Mt 8:28), exert superhuman strength (see Mk 5:4), be self-destructive (see Mk 5:5; 9:22), be blind or unable to speak (see Mt 12:22; Mk 9:17), experience convulsions and seizures (see Mk 9:18,26), and suffer sickness (see Mt 4:24; Mk 1:32).

Evil spirits and their power are real, but Jesus’ authority over them is just as real. These demons knew they had encountered the kingdom of God and the authority of Jesus. They also knew they would face final judgment sometime in the future (see Mt 8:29).

These spiritual realities remain, though modern society may feel some discomfort about reality that goes beyond physical evidence or psychological explanation. While demonic power is real, mental instability can arise from other causes as well. Mental illness can be traced to medical conditions such as chemical or hormonal imbalances. Severe setbacks or major losses in life can also cause emotional distress. It takes discernment and compassion to distinguish such symptoms from those caused by sin, spiritual rebellion or demonic oppression.

**4:41 Who is this?** Mark uses the disciples’ question to evoke a similar response in the minds of his readers. Mark relates the works and words of the one he calls “Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God” (1:1).

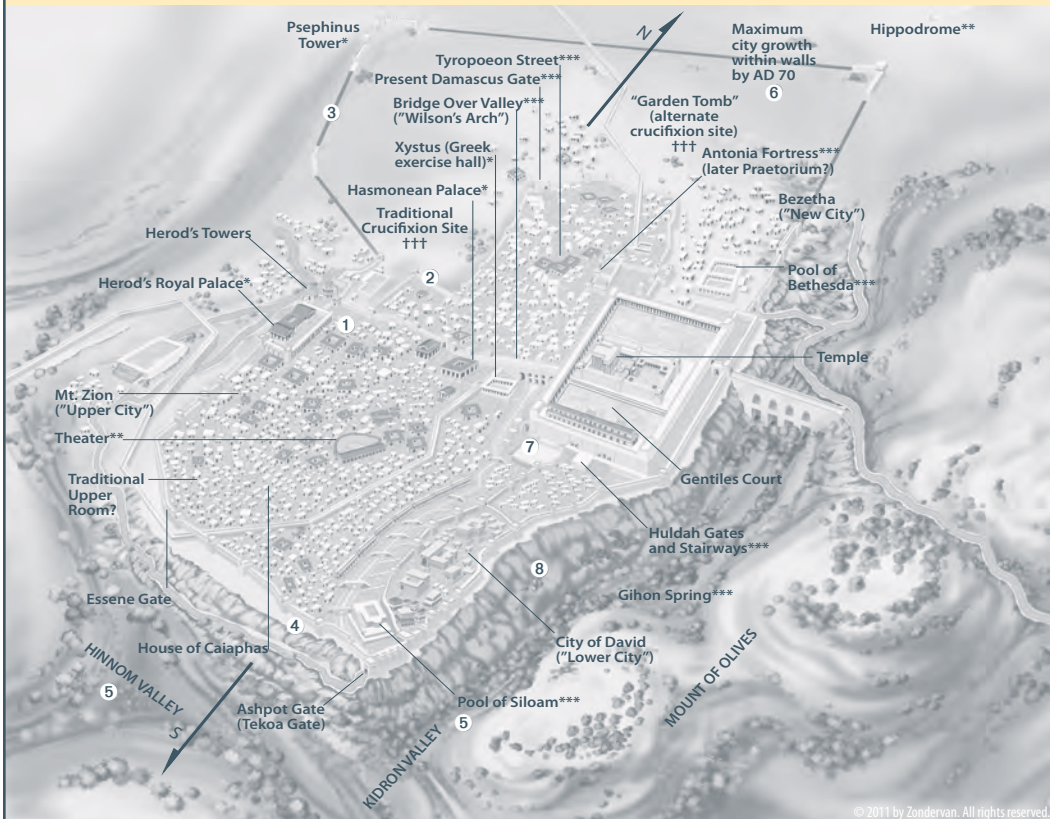
**5:1 the region of the Gerasenes.** This area is on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The form of the name varies (Mt 8:28; Lk 8:26,37).

**5:17-20 the people began to plead with Jesus to**

**leave their region.** Jesus was not well received in this region. His presence had cost financial loss to some, although it meant liberation to the demoniac. Jesus could have healed and saved in that region, but he was turned away by its fearful citizens. **Decapolis.** This literally means “ten cities.” This largely Gentile, Greek-speaking area was an important strategic link in Rome’s military defense.

## JERUSALEM DURING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Herod the Great (reigned 37–4 BC) rebuilt the temple and its surrounding walls and also built a palace, a fortress, a theater and a hippodrome (stadium) for horse and chariot races. He brought the city to the zenith of its architectural beauty and Roman cultural expression. This became Jerusalem in the time of Jesus.



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**1** The "FIRST WALL," so named by Josephus, encircled the city during the Hasmonean period, which began in 167 BC. After the revolt led by Judas Maccabeus in 167, Jerusalem expanded steadily in a period of independence under its own Jewish kings.

**2** The "SECOND WALL" was built by Herod the Great or by earlier Hasmonean kings. Precise location is difficult to determine. This wall was put up around a market area in a valley, protecting it from raiding and looting, but was of questionable military value. At its eastern end, however, Herod built a military barracks (Antonia Fortress).

**3** The "THIRD WALL" was begun by Herod Agrippa I between AD 41 and 44 to enclose the growing northern suburbs, but the work was apparently stopped. Its construction was resumed, in haste, only after the First Jewish Revolt broke out in AD 66.

**4** House of Caiaphas the high priest,\* identified here with today's Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu.

**5** Deep valleys on the east, south and west permitted urban expansion only to the north.

**6** Maximum city growth within walls by AD 70.

**7** Archaeological excavations have revealed a monumental stairway and the continuation of Tyropoeon Street,\*\* which lies along the valley called "Valley of the Cheesemongers" by Josephus.

**8** The Siloam aqueduct-tunnel, 1,749' long, was cut through solid bedrock, was 5'11" high (average) and followed an "S" shaped course made necessary by engineering difficulties. It was dug by King Hezekiah and provided water during King Sennacherib's threat to lay siege to the city in 701 BC (2Ch 32:30). Water flows through it to this very day.

\* Location generally known, but style of architecture is unknown; artist's concept only, and Roman architecture is assumed.

\*\* Location and architecture unknown, but referred to in written history; shown here for illustrative purposes.

\*\*\* Ancient feature has remained, or appearance has been determined from evidence.

<sup>20</sup>So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis<sup>a</sup> how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

### Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

5:22-43pp — Mt 9:18-26; Lk 8:41-56

<sup>21</sup>When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. <sup>22</sup>Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup>He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” <sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

<sup>31</sup>“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

<sup>32</sup>But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

<sup>35</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

<sup>36</sup>Overhearing<sup>b</sup> what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

<sup>37</sup>He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup>When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup>He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup>But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup>He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup>Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup>He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

### A Prophet Without Honor

6:1-6pp — Mt 13:54-58

**6** Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup>When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? <sup>3</sup>Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph,<sup>c</sup> Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” <sup>5</sup>He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>He was amazed at their lack of faith.

<sup>a</sup> 20 That is, the Ten Cities    <sup>b</sup> 36 Or Ignoring    <sup>c</sup> 3 Greek *Joses*, a variant of *Joseph*

**5:22 one of the synagogue leaders.** Jairus was a lay leader charged with supervising services at the synagogue.

**5:26 suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors.** Mark is not complimentary toward the physicians who had treated this woman.

**5:29-30 Immediately.** This word is used twice in this context. Both the woman and Jesus simultaneously knew what had happened. **Who touched my clothes?** Jesus turned when he was touched and confronted the woman before she disappeared. He wanted to correct any mistaken notion she may have had about her healing. It was not any magical quality of his clothing but his divine will that had made her well.

**5:33 told him the whole truth.** Jesus’ kind manner and tender words must have eased the fear this woman had of being revealed. Naturally, the time that Jesus took to care for the woman must have worried the already tense disciples.

**5:34 Daughter.** Jesus used this tender word to address this woman, and he noted that her faith made the difference, for it was correctly placed in him. Faith itself does not heal—it is the proper object of that faith, Jesus, who heals.

**5:43 He gave strict orders.** The command to keep the miracle a secret was a temporary measure, for certainly the girl’s appearance could not be hidden very long. Such orders would, however, allow Jesus to exit quietly. Jesus did not want to be known primarily as a miracle worker, lest people seek him for the wrong reasons.

**6:4 A prophet is not without honor except in his own town.** This maxim is still repeated and is still true today. Perhaps others were jealous of Jesus’ popularity and huge following. Their envy even took the form of violence against Christ (Lk 4:29).

**Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

6:7-11pp — Mt 10:1,9-14; Lk 9:1,3-5

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. <sup>7</sup>Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

<sup>8</sup>These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff — no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. <sup>9</sup>Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. <sup>10</sup>Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>11</sup>And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

<sup>12</sup>They went out and preached that people should repent. <sup>13</sup>They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

**John the Baptist Beheaded**6:14-29pp — Mt 14:1-12  
6:14-16pp — Lk 9:7-9

<sup>14</sup>King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, <sup>a</sup>“John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

<sup>15</sup>Others said, “He is Elijah.”

And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”

<sup>16</sup>But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”

<sup>17</sup>For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. <sup>18</sup>For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” <sup>19</sup>So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, <sup>20</sup>because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled<sup>b</sup>; yet he liked to listen to him.

<sup>21</sup>Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup>When the daughter of<sup>c</sup> Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.” <sup>23</sup>And he promised

her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”

<sup>24</sup>She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?”

“The head of John the Baptist,” she answered.

<sup>25</sup>At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

<sup>26</sup>The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, <sup>28</sup>and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup>On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

**Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand**6:32-44pp — Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:5-13  
6:32-44Ref — Mk 8:2-9

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

<sup>32</sup>So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup>But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>35</sup>By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. <sup>36</sup>Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” <sup>37</sup>But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages<sup>d</sup>! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

<sup>38</sup>“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

<sup>a</sup> 14 Some early manuscripts *He was saying* <sup>b</sup> 20 Some early manuscripts *he did many things* <sup>c</sup> 22 Some early manuscripts *When his daughter* <sup>d</sup> 37 Greek *take two hundred denarii*

**6:14 King Herod.** This is Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, the king who tried to kill the baby Jesus (Mt 2:1-18). After Herod the Great’s death in 4 BC his kingdom was divided between Archelaus, who received Judea and Samaria; Philip, who ruled Iturea and Trachonitis, north and east of Galilee; and Antipas, who controlled Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39. Jesus ministered largely in the territory ruled by Antipas.

**6:18 not lawful.** John’s message to Herod was that his divorce was not lawful as grounds for remarriage.

John’s declaration could be based on Jesus’ stern words about divorce (10:11-12) or on Leviticus 20:21, which prohibits a man from taking his brother’s wife.

**6:23 up to half my kingdom.** This is an expression meaning a large amount but with some limits.

**6:34 had compassion on them.** The Gospels record several times that when Jesus saw a need he responded compassionately (1:41). That compassion led to action, despite an obvious lack of food in this instance.

**6:36-37 Send the people away.** The disciples sought to avoid responsibility for the hungry multitude.

When they found out, they said, “Five — and two fish.”

<sup>39</sup>Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup>and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup>The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

### Jesus Walks on the Water

6:45-51pp — Mt 14:22-32; Jn 6:15-21  
6:53-56pp — Mt 14:34-36

<sup>45</sup>Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup>After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

<sup>47</sup>Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. <sup>48</sup>He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, <sup>49</sup>but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, <sup>50</sup>because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” <sup>51</sup>Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, <sup>52</sup>for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. <sup>54</sup>As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. <sup>55</sup>They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went — into villages, towns or countryside — they

placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

### That Which Defiles

7:1-23pp — Mt 15:1-20

**7** The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup>and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup>(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup>When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.<sup>a</sup>)

<sup>5</sup>So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”

<sup>6</sup>He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>7</sup>They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>8</sup>You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

<sup>9</sup>And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe<sup>c</sup> your own traditions! <sup>10</sup>For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’<sup>d</sup> and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’<sup>e</sup> <sup>11</sup>But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God) — <sup>12</sup>then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. <sup>13</sup>Thus you nullify the word

<sup>a</sup> 4 Some early manuscripts *pitchers, kettles and dining couches*  
<sup>b</sup> 6,7 Isaiah 29:13 <sup>c</sup> 9 Some manuscripts *set up* <sup>d</sup> 10 Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16 <sup>e</sup> 10 Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9

**6:39-40 in groups of hundreds and fifties.** Details such as sitting on the green grass, which is possible only in late winter and early spring, and the fact that the groups were counted are indications that an eyewitness, probably Peter, recounted this story to Mark.

**6:43 twelve basketfuls of broken pieces.** These were small baskets commonly carried by travelers. It is possible to conclude that the leftovers gave each disciple enough food for his own use.

**6:51 he climbed into the boat with them.** Three miracles are contained in this brief account (vv. 47-51): (1) In the darkness Jesus saw the disciples out in the storm miles away, (2) Jesus walked on the water and (3) Jesus showed complete control over his creation when the wind ceased.

**6:56 wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside.** Mark summarizes Jesus’ healing ministry, noting how widespread it was.

**7:3-4 The Pharisees.** These two verses explain the tra-

dition of handwashing and various kinds of ceremonial uncleanness. Mark’s intended readers in Rome likely needed more background on the Jewish faith to understand this controversy.

**7:5 the tradition of the elders.** This phrase refers to a series of rules meant to bolster the ceremonial law of the Jews. Its authority was not supported by Scripture. The question indirectly challenged Jesus, for as the disciples’ teacher he was judged responsible for their actions.

**7:6-7 hypocrites.** The term originally referred to actors who wore masks on stage as they played different characters. Thus the Pharisees were not genuinely religious; they were merely playing a part for all to see.

**7:11-13 But you say.** This shows the absolute contrast between God’s will and humanity’s empty tradition. **Corban.** This was evidently a pious-sounding evasion of the requirement of honoring one’s parents by supporting them financially.

of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

<sup>14</sup>Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup>Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” <sup>[16]</sup><sup>a</sup>

<sup>17</sup>After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup>“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup>For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

<sup>20</sup>He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup>For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come — sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup>adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup>All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

### Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman’s Faith

7:24-30pp — Mt 15:21-28

<sup>24</sup>Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.<sup>b</sup> He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup>In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup>The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup>“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

<sup>28</sup>“Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

<sup>29</sup>Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

<sup>30</sup>She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

7:31-37pp — Mt 15:29-31

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into

the region of the Decapolis.<sup>c</sup> <sup>32</sup>There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

<sup>33</sup>After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup>He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means “Be opened!”). <sup>35</sup>At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

<sup>36</sup>Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup>People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

### Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

8:1-9pp — Mt 15:32-39

8:1-9Ref — Mk 6:32-44

8:11-21pp — Mt 16:1-12

**8** During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, <sup>2</sup>“I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.”

<sup>4</sup>His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

<sup>5</sup>“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

<sup>6</sup>He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. <sup>7</sup>They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. <sup>8</sup>The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>9</sup>About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, <sup>10</sup>he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

<sup>a</sup> 16 Some manuscripts include here the words of 4:23. <sup>b</sup> 24 Many early manuscripts *Tyre and Sidon* <sup>c</sup> 31 That is, the Ten Cities

**7:24 the vicinity of Tyre.** This city is the farthest Jesus traveled from Israel during his public ministry.

**7:27 to the dogs.** Jesus is not attempting to insult the woman by using this metaphor. In fact, he is testing her faith. Matthew records Jesus’ reaction to her reply, “Woman, you have great faith” (Mt 15:28).

**7:28 she replied.** The woman understood Jesus’ test and persistently replied that even during the meal the dogs consume the children’s crumbs that fall from the table.

**7:32-35 who was deaf.** The healing of this man who was deaf (who also had a speech impediment) is one

of the two miracles recorded by Mark only. (The other is the healing of the man who was blind in 8:22-26.)

**8:8 seven basketfuls.** There was one basket for each original loaf. These baskets were much larger than the 12 small personal baskets mentioned in 6:43. It was the kind of larger basket that was used to lower Paul over the wall of Damascus (Ac 9:25).

**8:10 Dalmanutha.** This was probably on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, about three miles north of modern Tiberias and about five miles southwest of Capernaum. This is the only time it is mentioned in the New Testament.

<sup>11</sup>The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup>He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” <sup>13</sup>Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

### The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

<sup>14</sup>The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup>“Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

<sup>16</sup>They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

<sup>17</sup>Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup>Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? <sup>19</sup>When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

<sup>20</sup>“And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

<sup>21</sup>He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

### Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

<sup>22</sup>They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup>He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

<sup>24</sup>He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

<sup>25</sup>Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into<sup>a</sup> the village.”

### Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

8:27-29pp — Mt 16:13-16; Lk 9:18-20

<sup>27</sup>Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

<sup>28</sup>They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

<sup>29</sup>“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

<sup>30</sup>Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

### Jesus Predicts His Death

8:31 — 9:1pp — Mt 16:21-28; Lk 9:22-27

<sup>31</sup>He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup>But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

### The Way of the Cross

<sup>34</sup>Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wants to save their life<sup>b</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup>What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup>Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup>If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of

<sup>a</sup> 26 Some manuscripts go and tell anyone in <sup>b</sup> 35 The Greek word means either life or soul; also in verses 36 and 37.

#### 8:11 *The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus.*

The Pharisees’ testing of Jesus was crafty and devious. Obviously these men did not heed the many signs and wonders that Jesus had already performed. John 20:30-31 indicates that the signs were meant to produce faith. It is doubtful that the Pharisees would have changed their minds even if they had seen another miracle.

**8:17-21** *Do you still not see or understand?* The disciples continued to show a lack of spiritual discernment despite the miracles they had witnessed. Jesus’ rebuke was intended to make them recall what God had done for them.

**8:27** *Caesarea Philippi.* This city is about 25 miles north of Bethsaida and the Sea of Galilee. It stands on the southern edge of Mount Hermon. One of the sources of the Jordan River springs forth from under a large rocky cliff that rises a hundred or more feet above the village. The name Philippi distinguishes this town from Caesarea by the sea.

**8:29** *Who do you say I am?* Jesus emphatically asks his disciples for their understanding. **you.** Prominent in Jesus’ question is the word “you.” **You are the Messiah.** Peter answers for the group. Jesus wants his disciples to grasp firmly his true identity before he reveals to them the necessity of his coming death and resurrection. In Mark’s Gospel, only the disciples come to understand who Jesus is.

**8:30** *not to tell anyone about him.* Jesus’ warning may seem strange. Its explanation lies in the fact that the Jews expected the Messiah to be a political liberator. Jesus’ first coming was meant to accomplish another kind of liberation—release from sin. Hence Jesus was careful not to use the name Messiah publicly, for it was misunderstood by the Jewish people, their leaders and the Roman authorities.

**8:38** *when he comes in his Father’s glory.* This is the first glimpse of the fulfillment of all history (1Co 15:24-28). Those who will reign with Christ

Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

**9** And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

### The Transfiguration

9:2-8pp — Lk 9:28-36

9:2-13pp — Mt 17:1-13

<sup>2</sup>After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup>His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup>Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

<sup>8</sup>Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

<sup>10</sup>They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

<sup>11</sup>And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

<sup>12</sup>Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?"

<sup>13</sup>But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

### Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by an Impure Spirit

9:14-28; 30-32pp — Mt 17:14-19; 22,23; Lk 9:37-45

<sup>14</sup>When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

<sup>16</sup>"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.

<sup>17</sup>A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup>Whenever it seizes

him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

<sup>19</sup>"You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

<sup>20</sup>So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus,

## Q&A

### HOW CAN WE, IMPERFECT PEOPLE, LIVE THE WAY JESUS WANTS US TO LIVE? (Mk 9:19-24)

Jesus is never unsettled by our imperfections. Actually, he is at ease and hopeful with those who are glaringly imperfect. He dined with hated tax collectors and "champion" sinners (see Mt 9:10). He offered grace to a woman caught in adultery (see Jn 8:3-11). His own disciples — the men *he* chose — were sometimes dull, fickle and unbelieving (see Mt 15:16; Mk 9:19; 14:66-72). Even in his last hour, as he hung on the cross, Jesus welcomed a criminal into the kingdom (see Lk 23:43).

It seems Jesus sees potential in our imperfection. When we are the most acutely aware of our weakness, we are ready to grow. Those who have run out of self-reliance are ready to rely on Jesus to give them new life.

But Jesus is frustrated by dishonesty. He reserved his sharpest words for the religious frauds who did not realize they were in desperate trouble. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor" (Mt 9:12), he told them. So an important step toward living the way Jesus intends is being brutally honest about our radical imperfections. Bringing our sins into his light by giving them a specific name — lust, anger, gossip, gluttony, greed and so on — makes it possible for us to experience deep-soul healing from the Great Physician (see 1Jn 1:8-9).

But the goal is not to merely admit our imperfections and offenses. The goal is to transform our sinful natures by the Spirit of God so that we become the kind of people in whom the life of Jesus is most vividly expressed. Because we are human, imperfections are inevitable. But through Jesus, what's old can become new (see 2Co 5:17).

why people asked John the Baptist if he were Elijah (Jn 1:21). Moses was the lawgiver and liberator, while Elijah was the first of the great prophets. Their presence confirmed the reality that Jesus is the Messiah of Peter's confession.

invest their lives in that which will last (v. 35). Those who are willing to confess him today will be rewarded before the Father in heaven (Mt 5:10-12; 2Ti 2:11-13; Rev 2:26-28).

**9:4 Elijah.** Elijah is mentioned in Malachi 4:5-6 in connection with the future coming of Christ. This is

it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup>"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

<sup>23</sup>"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

<sup>24</sup>Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

<sup>25</sup>When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

<sup>26</sup>The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." <sup>27</sup>But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

<sup>28</sup>After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

<sup>29</sup>He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer.<sup>a</sup>"

### Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

9:33-37pp — Mt 18:1-5; Lk 9:46-48

<sup>30</sup>They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup>because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." <sup>32</sup>But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

<sup>33</sup>They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" <sup>34</sup>But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup>Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."

<sup>36</sup>He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup>"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

### 9:24 I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!

These words express the dilemma that even those who believe can be nagged by doubt and hopelessness. This man took the correct course by appealing to Jesus for help.

**9:40 for whoever is not against us is for us.** Jesus is not endorsing all who claim to follow him. Rather, this statement was meant to remind the disciples that God's work was not necessarily restricted to their small group.

### Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us

9:38-40pp — Lk 9:49,50

<sup>38</sup>"Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

<sup>39</sup>"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, <sup>40</sup>for whoever is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup>Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

### Causing to Stumble

<sup>42</sup>"If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. <sup>44</sup><sup>b</sup> <sup>45</sup>And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>46</sup><sup>b</sup> <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>where

"the worms that eat them do not die,  
and the fire is not quenched."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Everyone will be salted with fire.

<sup>50</sup>"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

### Divorce

10:1-12pp — Mt 19:1-9

**10** Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

<sup>3</sup>"What did Moses command you?" he replied.

<sup>4</sup>They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

<sup>a</sup> 29 Some manuscripts *prayer and fasting* <sup>b</sup> 44,46 Some manuscripts include here the words of verse 48. <sup>c</sup> 48 Isaiah 66:24

**9:49 Everyone will be salted with fire.** This phrase may refer to the trials and judgments that all will face—believers with trials that purify faith, unbelievers with the eternal fire of God's judgment.

**10:4 a certificate of divorce.** This was a document signed before witnesses. Its intent was to limit frivolous divorces. In Jesus' day, the interpretation of this custom varied widely. The disciples of Hillel allowed divorce for almost any reason, but the followers of Shammai permitted divorce only for sexual impurity.

<sup>5</sup>“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup>“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’<sup>a</sup> <sup>7</sup>“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,<sup>b</sup> <sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh.<sup>c</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup>When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. <sup>11</sup>He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup>And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

### The Little Children and Jesus

10:13-16pp — Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17

<sup>13</sup>People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

### The Rich and the Kingdom of God

10:17-31pp — Mt 19:16-30; Lk 18:18-30

<sup>17</sup>As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>18</sup>“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good — except God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’<sup>d</sup>”

<sup>20</sup>“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

<sup>21</sup>Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

<sup>22</sup>At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

**10:11** *Anyone who divorces his wife.* Mark includes no exception to Christ’s prohibition of divorce, nor is any exception listed in Luke 16:18, Romans 7:1-2, or 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. Compare Matthew 5:32 where the exception is made.

**10:18** *No one is good—except God alone.* This reply is a claim to deity, which Jesus asks the young ruler to recognize.

## Q&A

### DOES THE BIBLE TALK ABOUT REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE?

(Mk 10:11-12)

The Bible certainly does not cast a favorable light on divorce (e.g., Mal 2:16). However, there are some passages that seem to permit divorce and remarriage.

The language employed by Moses in regulating divorce (see Dt 24:1-4) indicates that divorce predated the Mosaic Law. This is why Jesus said that Moses merely “permitted” divorce due to the hardness of the hearts of the people (Mt 19:8). Jesus taught that it was not lawful to divorce “for any and every reason” (Mt 19:3). But he did allow divorce and remarriage in cases of “sexual immorality” (Mt 19:9).

Some scholars believe the phrase “except for sexual immorality” in Matthew 19:9 only grants permission to divorce—not to remarry. Others argue that Jesus’ warning that divorce constitutes adultery only makes sense if remarriage is assumed. The apostle Paul reiterated Jesus’ teaching on this subject but also allowed for remarriage in cases in which an unbeliever deserts a believing partner. Under those circumstances, the believer who has been abandoned “is not bound” (1Co 7:15).

In summary, the Bible teaches that marriage is a permanent state that is normally dissolved only by the death of one of the partners (see Ge 2:23-24). The only stated exceptions to this are two: (1) if one partner has engaged in sexual immorality, and (2) if an unbeliever has abandoned the believing partner. When one of these situations occurs, the innocent party may remarry. It’s also important to recognize that anyone who has broken God’s pattern for marriage can find forgiveness through Christ (see 1Jn 1:9). And those who have remarried have entered into a covenant that should be “honored by all” and maintained with purity (Heb 13:4).

<sup>24</sup>The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is<sup>e</sup> to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go

<sup>a</sup> 6 Gen. 1:27 <sup>b</sup> 7 Some early manuscripts do not have *and be united to his wife.* <sup>c</sup> 8 Gen. 2:24 <sup>d</sup> 19 Exodus 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20 <sup>e</sup> 24 Some manuscripts *is for those who trust in riches*

**10:19** *shall not.* Jesus recounts the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments. *shall not defraud.* Jesus inserts this phrase just before the fifth commandment. All of these commands concern the fair and ethical treatment of other people (Ex 20:12-17).

**10:25-27** *It is easier.* This comparison of a camel going through a needle is a literal one. In human terms, it is

through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>26</sup>The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

<sup>27</sup>Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

<sup>29</sup>“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup>will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — along with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup>But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

### Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

10:32-34pp — Mt 20:17-19; Lk 18:31-33

<sup>32</sup>They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. <sup>33</sup>“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, <sup>34</sup>who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

### The Request of James and John

10:35-45pp — Mt 20:20-28

<sup>35</sup>Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

<sup>36</sup>“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

<sup>37</sup>They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

<sup>38</sup>“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

<sup>39</sup>“We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup>but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

<sup>41</sup>When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup>Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

10:46-52pp — Mt 20:29-34; Lk 18:35-43

<sup>46</sup>Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>48</sup>Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>49</sup>Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” <sup>50</sup>Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

not just difficult, but totally impossible, for a rich person to be saved. But it is also impossible for anyone at all to be saved apart from God’s grace and power. God provides the means of salvation, enlightens the sinner’s understanding and regenerates the believing soul.

**10:30 in this present age.** This is the time between Christ’s first and second comings. Mark alone mentions that persecutions will follow as well—a point his Roman readers may have already known.

**10:37 at your right and the other at your left.** To be seated at a king’s right hand was to take the position of the most prominence; the person seated at the left hand ranked just below that (Lk 22:24–30). Jesus had to remind the disciples again about the price of greatness in God’s kingdom.

**10:38 drink the cup I drink ... be baptized with the baptism.** These phrases are references to the suffering and death that awaited Jesus (14:36). Jesus wanted his disciples to understand the mocking, scourging, beating and torture he would have to endure.

#### 10:45 The Ministry of Christ—

1. *He is Savior.* Sinful people to be saved (1Ti 1:15); Christ’s qualifications to be Savior (Jn 10:18–38);

his humiliating death (Jn 19:18); bodily resurrection to guarantee our salvation (1Co 15:13–22); and results of salvation (Jn 5:24). It is no wonder that, in light of these realities, Paul speaks of Christ as “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).

2. *He is High Priest.* The high priest brought the people before God on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:32–33). Jesus is eminently qualified to be our high priest: appointed by God (Heb 5:5), eternal (Heb 7:24–25), sinless (Heb 7:26), his offering was final (Heb 9:28) and his mediation is effective (Ro 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1Jn 2:1). As the only qualified high priest for men and women, Jesus Christ thus constitutes the only way to God (1Ti 2:5).
3. *He is King.* King implies sovereign authority and rule over all. This right belongs only to Jesus Christ who is called “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 17:14; 19:16). He is destined to rule as king and every knee must ultimately bow and acknowledge his authority (Php 2:10). Those who acknowledge Christ as King and Lord in this life will reign with him; those who do not will be judged by him (Rev 20:11–15).

<sup>51</sup>“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

<sup>52</sup>“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

### Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

11:1-10pp — Mt 21:1-9; Lk 19:29-38

11:7-10pp — Jn 12:12-15

**11** As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup>If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

<sup>4</sup>They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup>some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” <sup>6</sup>They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup>When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!<sup>a</sup>”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

<sup>11</sup>Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

### Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts

11:12-14pp — Mt 21:18-22

11:15-18pp — Mt 21:12-16; Lk 19:45-47; Jn 2:13-16

11:20-24pp — Mt 21:19-22

<sup>12</sup>The next day as they were leaving Bethany,

**11:8-11 Bethany.** Jesus retired there each night, perhaps staying in a friend’s home. But in view of the fact that Jesus appears to have had no breakfast the next day (v. 12), he and the Twelve may have camped outside this night.

**11:13 not the season for figs.** Passover always comes in March or April, and fig season is not until May or June. However, fig trees generally produce a number of buds in March, leaves in April and ripe fruit later on. Jesus was looking for the edible buds, the lack of which indicated that the tree would be fruitless that year.

Jesus was hungry. <sup>13</sup>Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup>Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

<sup>15</sup>On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup>and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. <sup>17</sup>And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’<sup>c</sup>? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’<sup>d</sup>”

<sup>18</sup>The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

<sup>19</sup>When evening came, Jesus and his disciples<sup>e</sup> went out of the city.

<sup>20</sup>In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup>Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

<sup>22</sup>“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup>“Truly<sup>f</sup> I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. <sup>25</sup>And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” [26]<sup>g</sup>

### The Authority of Jesus Questioned

11:27-33pp — Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8

<sup>27</sup>They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. <sup>28</sup>“By what authority are you doing these

<sup>a</sup> <sup>9</sup> A Hebrew expression meaning “Save!” which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 10

<sup>b</sup> <sup>9</sup> Psalm 118:25,26

<sup>c</sup> <sup>17</sup> Isaiah 56:7 <sup>d</sup> <sup>17</sup> Jer. 7:11 <sup>e</sup> <sup>19</sup> Some early manuscripts *came*,

*Jesus* <sup>f</sup> <sup>22,23</sup> Some early manuscripts “If you have faith in God,”

*Jesus answered*, <sup>23</sup>“truly” <sup>g</sup> <sup>26</sup> Some manuscripts include here words similar to Matt. 6:15.

**11:17 den of robbers.** Jesus was referring to the practice of cheating people, both Israelites and those of other nations, either through a crooked exchange of money or by selling inferior products.

**11:21 The fig tree you cursed has withered!** The passage emphasizes the power of true faith. Some have suggested that the fig tree represented Israel, which bore no fruit and would soon face the judgment of God.

things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>30</sup>John’s baptism — was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

<sup>31</sup>They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ <sup>32</sup>But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ . . .” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

<sup>33</sup>So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

### The Parable of the Tenants

12:1-12pp — Mt 21:33-46; Lk 20:9-19

**12** Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. <sup>2</sup>At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. <sup>5</sup>He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

<sup>6</sup>“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

<sup>7</sup>“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ <sup>8</sup>So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

<sup>9</sup>“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture:

“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;

<sup>11</sup>the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes<sup>a</sup>?”

<sup>12</sup>Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

### Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

12:13-17pp — Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:20-26

<sup>13</sup>Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. <sup>14</sup>They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax<sup>b</sup> to Caesar or not? <sup>15</sup>Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” <sup>16</sup>They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

And they were amazed at him.

### Marriage at the Resurrection

12:18-27pp — Mt 22:23-33; Lk 20:27-38

<sup>18</sup>Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. <sup>19</sup>“Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. <sup>20</sup>Now there were seven brothers. The

<sup>a</sup> 11 Psalm 118:22,23    <sup>b</sup> 14 A special tax levied on subject peoples, not on Roman citizens

**11:29-30 Answer me.** The intent of Jesus’ question was to expose once again the insincerity of his detractors. **John’s baptism.** This refers to the authority of John’s baptism. **from heaven.** Was it ordained by God and worthy of obedience? **of human origin.** Or was it of human contrivance and void of any spiritual authority and reality?

**12:1 Jesus then began to speak to them in parables.** Parables usually get across a significant truth, but the details are not meant to correspond exactly with particular spiritual realities. In this parable, the owner of the vineyard represents God, but God himself was never so mistaken as to assume they would respect his Son. God is omniscient, whereas the vineyard owner in the parable is not. This story illustrates the immense patience God had with Israel.

**12:12 looked for a way to arrest him.** Only as the final points of the parable were made did these evil men realize that Jesus was speaking of them.

**12:14 you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others.** This comment was intended as a compliment. The teachers recognized that Jesus was partial to no one. The question, however, was a lose-lose proposition: a yes answer would alienate Jews who opposed Rome, while a no answer could be taken as treason against the state.

**12:18 Sadducees.** These were an elite group of religious leaders who denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection. They rejected the oral traditions and accepted only the validity of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

**12:19-22 Moses wrote for us.** The custom of marrying the widow of one’s brother was supported by Deuteronomy 25:5-6, but it was not absolutely binding (Dt 25:7-10).

first one married and died without leaving any children. <sup>21</sup>The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. <sup>22</sup>In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. <sup>23</sup>At the resurrection<sup>a</sup> whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

<sup>24</sup>Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? <sup>25</sup>When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup>Now about the dead rising — have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? <sup>27</sup>He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

### The Greatest Commandment

12:28-34pp — Mt 22:34-40

<sup>28</sup>One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

<sup>29</sup>"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'<sup>c</sup> <sup>30</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'<sup>d</sup> <sup>31</sup>The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>e</sup> There is no commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup>"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup>To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

**12:26-27 I am the God of Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob.** Jesus quotes from the law—the book of Exodus—to make his point. God said I am the God of the three patriarchs mentioned, not "I was their God, but now they are dead." He still is their God because they are still alive. Their souls not only live after death, but their bodies will be raised anew as well.

**12:28 Of all the commandments, which is the most important?** At the beginning of answering the question, "Which is the most important?," Jesus quotes what is known in Judaism as the *Shema* (Dt 6:4-5). The *Shema* is described by Jews as the most important words a Jew can know. These words should drive us to the cross. There, we understand his love for us and are constantly motivated to seek to love him better because of what he has done. We can only be thankful at the comprehensiveness of his love. Even though we sin every day of our lives, he forgives. We just need to keep coming to him for that forgiveness.

### Whose Son Is the Messiah?

12:35-37pp — Mt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44  
12:38-40pp — Mt 23:1-7; Lk 20:45-47

<sup>35</sup>While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? <sup>36</sup>David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

"The Lord said to my Lord:  
"Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet."<sup>f</sup>

<sup>37</sup>David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

### Warning Against the Teachers of the Law

<sup>38</sup>As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup>and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. <sup>40</sup>They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

### The Widow's Offering

12:41-44pp — Lk 21:1-4

<sup>41</sup>Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup>But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

<sup>43</sup>Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup>They all gave out of

<sup>a</sup> 23 Some manuscripts resurrection, when people rise from the dead, <sup>b</sup> 26 Exodus 3:6 <sup>c</sup> 29 Or The Lord our God is one Lord <sup>d</sup> 30 Deut. 6:4,5 <sup>e</sup> 31 Lev. 19:18 <sup>f</sup> 36 Psalm 110:1

**12:29 Hear, O Israel.** This phrase from Deuteronomy 6:4 is commonly called the *Shema* (from a Hebrew word meaning "to hear") and is repeated by Jews the world over, as expressing the essence of their faith in God.

**12:35 in the temple.** This does not refer to the sanctuary itself, where only the priests were allowed to minister. The temple environs included a number of porticos and courts. One was designated especially for women, another for men. Gentiles could view the temple from an outer area.

**12:43-44 this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.** Jesus' comparison of the percentages contributed by the rich and the poor reminds us that God measures not how much we give, but how much we retain. Those with greater income have an obligation to return a larger percentage of it to God's work.

their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.”

### The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

13:1-37pp — Mt 24:1-51; Lk 21:5-36

**13** As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

<sup>2</sup>“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup>As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>“Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

<sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

<sup>9</sup>“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. <sup>10</sup>And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. <sup>11</sup>Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

<sup>12</sup>“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup>Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

<sup>14</sup>“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’<sup>a</sup> standing where it<sup>b</sup> does not belong — let the reader understand — then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup>Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. <sup>16</sup>Let

**13:1-2** *What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!* The disciples’ excitement over the temple’s tremendous construction was a natural reaction to splendid and majestic architecture; each stone weighed several tons. Josephus described its magnificence. There was nothing like it in all the world. Begun by Herod the Great in 20 BC, the temple was later completed by Herod’s descendants some time before AD 66. Its beautiful white marble stones with gold ornamentation reached 100 feet high. Surrounding it were colonnaded walkways, courtyards and stairways that filled 20 acres of the most prominent landscape in all Jerusalem.

**13:11-12** *the Holy Spirit.* The promise given that the Holy Spirit will guide one’s speech in the hour of trial

## Q&A

### ARE NATURAL DISASTERS LITERALLY “ACTS OF GOD”? DOES HE CAUSE THEM? (Mk 13:8)

When a volcano erupts, a hurricane devastates a city or lightning ignites a vast forest fire, it is natural for us to ponder God’s relationship to the events. How should we regard such tragic occurrences? Are they really “acts of God,” as insurance companies still label them?

Jesus asked his disciples a similar question. In Luke 13:4, Jesus asked, “Those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them — do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?” Jesus was apparently referring to a well-known disaster of his time that had killed 18 people. His point was simple: events and tragedies beyond our control are part of life. There is not necessarily a direct cause and effect between the people who suffer and the tragedies themselves.

The Bible offers two reasons for natural disasters. First, the world itself is beautiful but broken. All of creation suffers as a consequence of the entry of sin, death and decay into the world (see Ro 5:12; 8:19–22). Second, all of human history takes place within the context of the cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. Job did not know that the Lord was using his life as an example of faithfulness when Satan afflicted him with sores and sadness.

Thankfully, Jesus left his disciples (and us) with this encouragement: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33).

no one in the field go back to get their cloak. <sup>17</sup>How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>18</sup>Pray that this will not take

<sup>a</sup> 14 Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11    <sup>b</sup> 14 Or he

applies first to the Twelve and only secondarily to others who will experience persecution. But this promise does not assure escape from persecution or even freedom from being put to death.

**13:13** *one who stands firm to the end will be saved.* This is not referring to regeneration or justification but to physical deliverance from affliction (vv. 19–20). The ones who physically endure will be delivered into Christ’s messianic kingdom.

**13:14** *standing where it does not belong.* This phrase refers to the presence of an idol standing in the temple. Daniel’s prediction primarily referred to placement of sacrifices to Zeus on the temple’s altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. Some believe that the destruction of the Herodian temple in AD 70 fulfilled Jesus’ prediction.

place in winter, <sup>19</sup>because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now — and never to be equaled again.

<sup>20</sup>“If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. <sup>21</sup>At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>22</sup>For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>23</sup>So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light;

<sup>25</sup>the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’<sup>a</sup>

<sup>26</sup>“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

<sup>28</sup>“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it<sup>b</sup> is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

### The Day and Hour Unknown

<sup>32</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Be on guard! Be alert!<sup>c</sup> You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup>It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

<sup>35</sup>“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come

back — whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup>If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup>What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

14:1-11pp — Mt 26:2-16

14:1,2,10,11pp — Lk 22:1-6

14:3-8Ref — Jn 12:1-8

**14** Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>2</sup>“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

<sup>3</sup>While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

<sup>4</sup>Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? <sup>5</sup>It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages<sup>d</sup> and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

<sup>6</sup>“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup>The poor you will always have with you,<sup>e</sup> and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. <sup>9</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

<sup>10</sup>Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup>They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

<sup>a</sup> 25 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4 <sup>b</sup> 29 Or he <sup>c</sup> 33 Some manuscripts alert and pray <sup>d</sup> 5 Greek than three hundred denarii <sup>e</sup> 7 See Deut. 15:11.

Others still await its fulfillment in the blasphemous actions of the antichrist in the last days (2Th 2:3-4).

**13:28-29 when you see these things happening.** Jesus likened the signs of his second coming to the sprouts of growth and leaves on a fig tree. Both point to the glories to come—the full flowering of the earth and return of Christ.

**13:32 But about that day or hour no one knows.** As one who was fully God and at the same time fully man, Jesus possessed all the attributes of deity, including omnipotence and omniscience. He knew what was in people’s hearts (2:8), and he could still the waves (4:39). When Jesus became a man, however, he voluntarily placed certain knowledge in the hands of the Father. Of course today, glorified in heaven, Jesus now knows the day and hour of his return.

**13:34-36 like a man going away.** Jesus’ parable of the absent master of the house is unique to Mark. The point of the parable is that the master could return at

any time, so all servants must be vigilant and watchful (Lk 19:11-27).

**14:3 alabaster.** Alabaster is a translucent stone still used to make ornamented jewelry boxes and other items of value. **nard.** Nard was a precious perfume imported from India, made from plants that grow in the high elevations of the Himalayas. This perfume is mentioned in the Song of Songs (1:12; 4:13-14).

**14:7 The poor you will always have with you.** Jesus’ statement does not show callousness towards the poor (Dt 15:7-11). His compassion for those overwhelmed by sickness and poverty appears frequently in the Gospels, and he encouraged others to meet their needs (10:21). But he also wanted people to give freely and of their own volition. No one can coerce a gift from another; no one should criticize another’s gift; and no one can read the heart of a giver. A giver’s motive is known only to God.

**The Last Supper**

14:12-26pp — Mt 26:17-30; Lk 22:7-23  
14:22-25pp — 1Co 11:23-25

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

<sup>13</sup>So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup>Say to the owner of the house he enters, "The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" <sup>15</sup>He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

<sup>16</sup>The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

<sup>17</sup>When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with me."

<sup>19</sup>They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

<sup>20</sup>"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

<sup>22</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

<sup>23</sup>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

<sup>24</sup>"This is my blood of the<sup>a</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup>"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

**14:14-15 a large room upstairs.** There is reason to suspect that the master of the house may have been Mark's father. Mark himself may have been the young man of verses 51 and 52. Acts 12:12 indicates that this house was later used as a gathering place for many believers who prayed together. Tradition has it that this was also the "upper room" of Acts 1:13 where over 100 believers met on Pentecost.

**14:19 Surely you don't mean me?** In Greek this is actually a negative question that implies a negative answer. The phrase means "It is not I, is it?" Matthew and John both identify the culprit as Judas, even though Mark does not (Mt 26:25; Jn 13:26).

**14:24 This is my blood.** This means that the contents of this cup represented Jesus' blood that would be shed for our sins. The sprinkling of blood was required to institute the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 29:12 (Heb 9:18-22). In the same way, Jesus' blood shed on the cross initiated the new covenant. His blood was shed for many. He died on the cross in the place of

<sup>26</sup>When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

**Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial**

14:27-31pp — Mt 26:31-35

<sup>27</sup>"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>28</sup>But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

<sup>29</sup>Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

<sup>30</sup>"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today — yes, tonight — before the rooster crows twice<sup>c</sup> you yourself will disown me three times."

<sup>31</sup>But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

**Gethsemane**

14:32-42pp — Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:40-46

<sup>32</sup>They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

<sup>33</sup>He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

<sup>35</sup>Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup>"Abba,<sup>d</sup> Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

<sup>37</sup>Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?"

<sup>a</sup> 24 Some manuscripts the new <sup>b</sup> 27 Zech. 13:7 <sup>c</sup> 30 Some early manuscripts do not have twice. <sup>d</sup> 36 Aramaic for father

many sinners from every nation. He paid the price for all of their sins. All those who believe in him will receive eternal life.

**14:26 When they had sung a hymn.** What they sang was no doubt from the Psalms. Frequently Psalms 113-118 were used in connection with the Passover.

**14:30 before the rooster crows twice.** Only Mark mentions Christ's prediction of Peter's denial. The incident would have remained vivid in Peter's mind when he related the story to Mark.

**14:34 My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow.** The crushing realization of having to bear the sin of the world and to lose, even temporarily, the fellowship of God the Father was nearly more than Jesus' soul could bear.

**14:35 the hour might pass from him.** This is a reference to the time Jesus would bear the punishment for the sin of the world in his own body, becoming, as it were, sin for all.