

The Gospel of Mark, 8:27-16:8



*A
RANSOM
for MANY*

A St. John's Bible Study

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Introduction to the Gospel of Mark, 8:27-16:8

Welcome to the book of Mark, once again! In the first eight chapters of the book, Mark led us into Peter's declaration that Jesus is "the Christ": the anointed deliverer of God's people. We saw that Jesus had authority to cast out demons (1:25), to forgive sins (2:10), to bind the strong man Satan (3:27), and command creation itself (4:39). We also saw that he came not just to reveal his authority, but to invite people into his kingdom, and bless them with an extravagant abundance in the wilderness of their lives (6:30 and following).

But the coming of this Christ, from a Jewish perspective at the time, meant victory over Rome and a restoration of the Temple. Shockingly, Jesus teaches his followers that instead of political victory, the Christ must "suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders...and be killed" (8:31). Instead of a restoration of the Temple, Jesus foretells its destruction (13:2). Peter thought he had finally understood who Jesus was with his confession in 8:29, but he had a long way to go still in his faith.

Mark's gospel has famously been called a "passion narrative with an extended introduction." This is because the Cross is absolutely central to the gospel which Mark proclaims, hinted at even in the opening declaration from the Father at Jesus' baptism (1:11). Here in the second half of the book the Cross looms large. Jesus will speak directly about it several times, and all of his teaching is given either to explain why the Cross is necessary, or to prepare his disciples for what will come because of the Cross. The Cross is the climax of Jesus' ministry; the incredible and remarkable moment where all of God's purposes through his Christ are fulfilled. We see fully and finally that he is a Christ who came "not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45). He, and he alone is the Son of God, whose death atones for our sin, cleanses us from all unrighteousness, and purchases our freedom. May God bless you and bring you closer to this Christ, as you come before his Cross.



Mark 8:27 - 9:1

As we pick up in this second half of the Mark series, there is a distinct change in the focus of Jesus' teaching. It has shifted from confirming his identity as the Christ, the Son of God to revealing what he must do as the Christ. This radical message of salvation and its tremendous cost is at the heart of the gospel of Mark. Jesus takes great lengths to impress upon those who would listen why the Christ must suffer, die, and be raised for our sakes, and what it means for us to follow in those footsteps. Whether it is Jesus' first faithful followers not comprehending the cost of being saved or modern hearers wrestling with the truth of Christ's resurrection this message profoundly shapes what it means to be a follower of him. And it is this message that kicks off here in Chapter 8 as Jesus begins his journey towards Jerusalem and the Cross.



Study #1

Mark 8:27-9:1

The Next Lesson

8:27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

The Cost

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 12.

Ⓐ *Pray*

Ⓑ *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

Ⓒ *A few questions to consider*

- How does Jesus describe what he must do?
- What words does Jesus use to describe discipleship?
- How many different titles or names are used in this passage for Jesus? Which does he prefer to use?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 12.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What are some changes in Jesus' teaching you notice compared to the previous section of Mark?
- Why might Jesus teach about the nature and cost of discipleship after the confrontation of vv.31-34?
- What does the word "must" in v.31 imply about Jesus' mission and his suffering?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- This passage reveals some of Jesus' deep concern and love for our souls and their salvation. What other soul saving promises from the world have you been tempted by?
- We are reminded throughout this gospel that the suffering of Christ does not surpass his sovereignty. How could you use this passage to teach someone else of Jesus' glory and grace?

STUDY NOTES

8:29 “...Peter answered him, “You are The Christ.”

Peter at this point accurately becomes a spokesperson for the twelve. “The Christ” is a term heavy with meaning. Echoing Ex 29:7,21; 1 Sam 10:1; 1Ki 19:16 the term comes from the consecration of a king to God’s service. This king would be chosen by him for a particular task, and endowed with power. “The Christ” in Jesus’ day was usually understood politically, as a long awaited individual who would rule Israel and free them from their enemies. However, Jesus’ liberation is deeper and more complete than mere political freedom. He is the king, come to set the world free from sin and death, to transform and fulfill all of Scripture. So while Peter’s identification is correct, and expresses the truth of the gospel, he does not understand what it truly means (vv.31-33). He is like a blindman half-healed seeing people as trees walking (v.24).

8:31 “...be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed...”

This is Mark’s way of describing the Sanhedrin. Both before and after the time of Christ, it was the highest tribunal or council of Jewish religious and political power. They were the highest tier of learned individuals in Israel. They regulated the yearly calendar, led the major festival days, and wrote and enforced Jewish law, even over the Jewish king. Everyone who was anyone was on this council, and it is these figures who are going to have Jesus killed.

8:31 “...be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed...”

8:31-33 marks the beginning of Jesus’ second big lesson for his disciples. This is a turning point within the book and is the first of three times Jesus will say this. The next few chapters of Mark are organized around Christ’s explicit revelations of his death, his suffering, and its meaning for the world. Now that the title of the Christ has been properly identified the work of fulfilling that title must take place.

8:31 “...the Son of Man must suffer many things...”

The term “must” appears here in Jesus’ first foretelling of his death. This emphasis from him as he teaches his disciples is that the Scriptures are fulfilled by his death, and it is necessary for his mission.

8:33 “...Get behind me, Satan!...”

Jesus meets a strong rebuke from Peter with an even stronger comeback. Jesus here identifies the source of Peter’s remarks as being from Satan, whom he also rebukes directly. Jesus is not calling Peter himself Satan, but is engaging the enemy of God as he attempts to disrupt Christ’s mission and tempt him away from completing it. (Mark 1:12-13, 3:23-27, Matthew 4:1-11).

8:35 “...For whoever would save his life will lose it...”

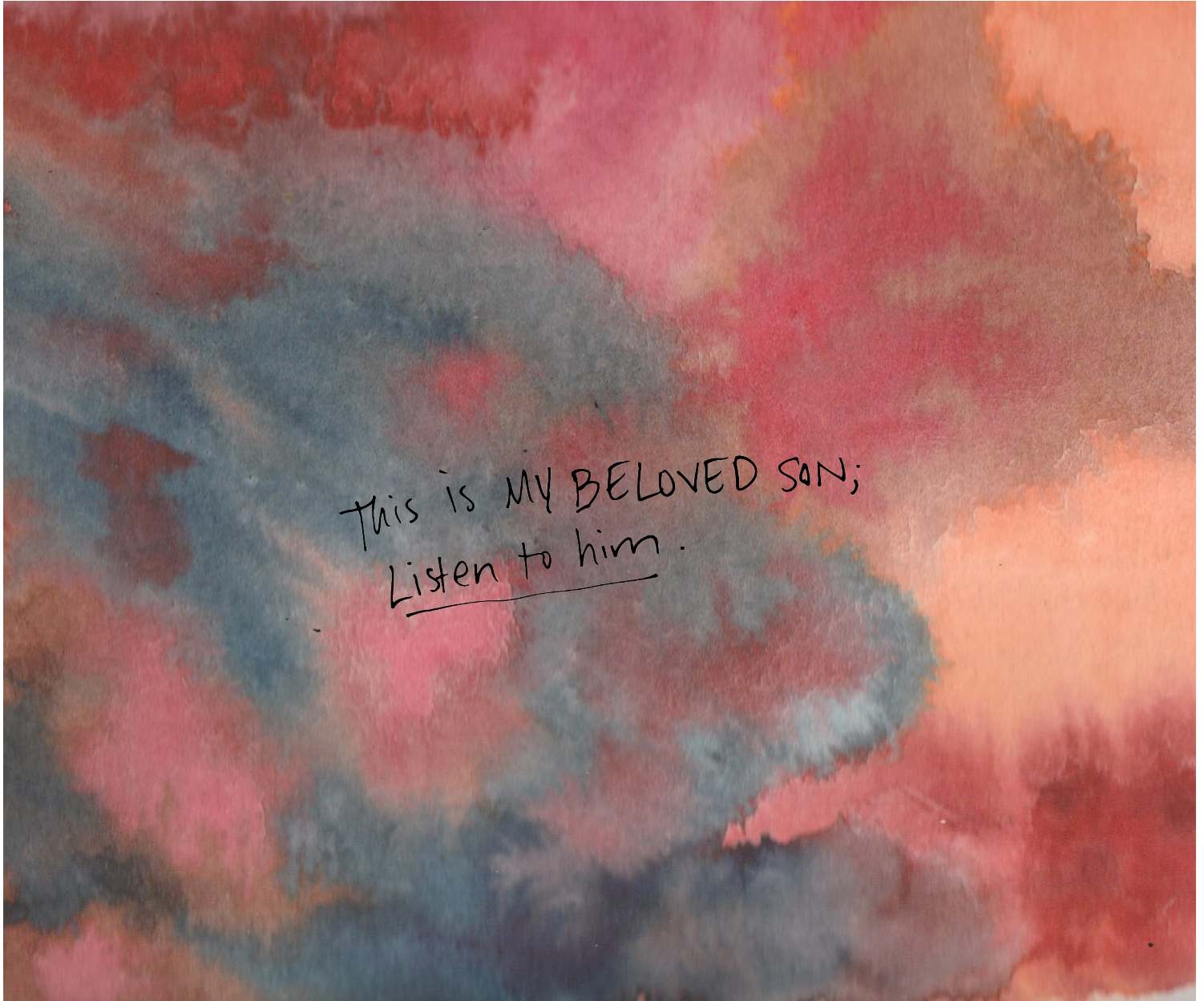
Jesus is not teaching about saving one’s own physical life. This is not a lesson on how the disciples can save their own skin, for if that was the lesson it is considerably backwards. Rather Jesus is teaching his followers that the salvation he offers to them is more than skin deep, and is a matter of the soul.

8:38 “...in this adulterous and sinful generation...”

This is a phrase dense with Old Testament meaning. The relationship between God and his nation is often described akin to a marriage, and as Israel continues to show its unfaithfulness in that relationship the image shifts to describing them as an adulterous and shameful partner. This image features particularly prominently in the latter prophets as God calls on Israel to return and repent from their unfaithful wanderings. For Jesus to use this term of Israel in his context is a further indictment upon the current state of Israel’s faith, even implying that they are ashamed of the Messiah and his words.

9:1 “...there are some standing here who will not taste death...”

The final two verses of this passage are not separate ideas as the verses may suggest but rather two events connected through the cross. Jesus is telling his disciples both about the future judgment day where all shall see Christ again in glory (v.38) and of his death and resurrection where the kingdom of God shall break into this world in power (9:1). His promise to the immediate disciples around him is that they shall certainly see the second event within their lifetimes.



Mark 9:2-13

The Transfiguration follows hard on the heels of Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as God's Messiah, Jesus' Passion prediction, Peter's rebuke of Jesus and Jesus' rebuke of Peter, and the statement that every follower of Jesus must deny himself and take up his cross. After finally being convinced that Jesus is the Messiah for whom the Jews have been waiting, the disciples are now told that he and his followers must suffer and die. At this point, the disciples may well have been rethinking the wisdom of their original decision to follow Jesus. Jesus must be mistaken—how could the suffering and death of the Messiah possibly be part of God's plan? And if Jesus wasn't mistaken, what fate would await his disciples? It may all have been simply too much for these Galilean fishermen to take in.

Study #2

Mark 9:2-13



The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 12 And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?
If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 20.

A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

C *A few questions to consider*

- From whose perspective is the Transfiguration narrated? To whom was the voice from the cloud directed? And what does this tell us about the purpose of the event?
- What description of Jesus is given while they are on the mountain?
- There have been numerous instructions by Jesus about secrecy (1:34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30). What is different about this one?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 20.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What is the significance of Jesus becoming “radiant, intensely white”? (See Ex 34:29-30; Dan 7:9; Ps 104:1-2)
- What is the significance of Elijah and Moses being with Jesus on the mountain? (See Deut 18:18-19 and Mal 4:5, but note who Elijah was to precede in Mal 4:5) Why did Jesus give his disciples the instruction in 9:9?
- What is the effect of this on the disciples of this event? Did they learn anything from the Transfiguration?

C *What’s the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- The specific time frame "after six days" (9:2) creates a strong link between this and the preceding passage. But how are they connected? And what light does this passage throw on the questions and answers in 8:27-29?
- What is the logical connection between the two clauses of 9:12? (See 6:14-15; 8:28)
- Why was the voice from the cloud necessary at this time?

STUDY NOTES

9:2 “...transfigured”

The word “transfiguration” simply means change of appearance.

9:4 “...Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus”

The parallel passage in Luke 9:30-31 tells us that Moses, Elijah and Jesus were talking about Jesus’ “departure” (*exodus* in Greek).

9:4 “Elijah with Moses”

The similarities between Elijah and Moses are striking, and too numerous to recount here. Suffice it to say that they both were fed in the wilderness, both led God’s people, both experienced a theophany at Horeb/Sinai, both spoke directly with God, and both were in the wilderness with the Spirit of God for forty days and forty nights. Moreover, both prefigured in their experience the coming rejection and suffering of Jesus.

Numerous suggestions have been made by commentators regarding the presence of Elijah and Moses. One is that they represent the Law and the Prophets: Moses being the Law-giver and Elijah being the most well known of the OT prophets. Another suggestion is that they represent the old covenant and the promise, Moses representing the old covenant and Elijah representing the promise of something still to come. Elijah was the prophet sent to prepare the people before the great and awesome day of the LORD (Mal 4:5); and Jesus fulfills God’s promise to raise up a prophet like Moses from among the Israelites, who would speak for God and who all must obey (Deut 18:18-19; Acts 3:22-23). In that sense, both featured in eschatological hopes identified in Scripture.

9:10 “...questioning what this rising from the dead might mean”

The disciples were puzzled about what Jesus meant by “rising from the dead.” In Jewish thought of Jesus’ day, “the resurrection” would happen to all the righteous at the end of time, not to one person ahead of all the others. They couldn’t understand Jesus’ implication that the Son of Man would rise from the dead, while they would be still living their normal, everyday lives.

9:12 “...it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer”

We learned in 8:31 that Jesus’ death “must” come about as fulfillment of divine purpose. Here we learn that the purpose is scriptural; these things “must” happen because they are part of the pattern already established in the OT.



Mark 9:14-50

In last week's passage, Jesus' glory was manifested in a particularly powerful way. The immediate outcome of that incredible revelation is a humbling return to life with the disciples. They struggle with the mission Jesus has given them, they don't understand his teaching, they bicker over who will be the greatest, and they interfere with others doing the work of the kingdom. While Jesus' response to them begins gently, it ends on a firm and sobering note. The kingdom of God requires holiness; in place of childish posturing, child-like humility.



Study #3

Mark 9:14-50

9:14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. 15 And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. 16 And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" 17 And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." 19 And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." 20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." 36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to

you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. **42** “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. **43** And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. *[See note on 9:44]* **45** And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. **47** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, **48** ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ **49** For everyone will be salted with fire. **50** Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?
 If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 29

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D *A few questions to consider*

- We're jumping into the middle of a story. Who is the "they" of v.14?
- There are a lot of episodes in today's passage. What are some recurring themes or topics that you notice?
- In what ways do the disciples fail in this passage?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 29.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Why do you think Mark gives so much detail about the healing of the boy in vv.14-29? Do you think there is any connection to Mark 9:2-13? What poignant lesson do we learn from the boy's father in v.24?
- In v.31 we read that Jesus "was teaching his disciples..." implying an ongoing process. What was so difficult about this teaching that Jesus needed to continually speak about it?
- Who are the "little ones" of v.42?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What role reversal lies at the heart of Jesus' ministry? How is this connected to the disciples' confusion about the Son of Man (vv.31-32)?
- The disciples look particularly inept in this passage. They are unable to heal, have not been praying, do not understand Jesus' teaching, fight for prestige, and oppose the ministry of others who are doing God's work. How does Jesus respond (e.g. vv.23, 35-37, 39-41)? What promises does he give in vv.41-50?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- One of the main lessons which Jesus gives to the disciples after casting out the demon, is to remind them that fighting against evil always begins with prayer (and maybe fasting). How does our prayer life deepen?
- It is easy to see power and authority as an opportunity to get what you want out of a situation, rather than an opportunity to serve. How does Jesus' example help us to serve?
- It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that discipleship is a mild and generally painless process of gradual growth. How does Jesus' final teaching in vv.41-50 remind you to live a life of sacrifice?

STUDY NOTES

9:29 "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer [and fasting]"

This verse is a summary of the first episode in this passage, explaining why the disciples could not cast the unclean spirit out of the boy; a ministry Jesus gave them in 6:7. Later manuscripts add the phrase "and fasting," which could be read as Jesus' teaching that different levels of unclean spirits required corresponding levels of discipline. This is the wrong interpretation, completely inconsistent with everything else that Jesus teaches about spiritual warfare. What Jesus' teaching emphasizes here, is that it is only by complete reliance upon the Father's will that exorcism can be accomplished. Prayer is the source of faith's power (with or without fasting), which the disciples had apparently forgotten.

9:31 "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men..."

This is the second time that Jesus directly teaches on his death, and with each teaching, he reveals more details. In each of them, Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man," which is an oblique reference to Daniel 7:13 that becomes explicit in Mark 13. Here in this passage, Jesus includes the promise of his resurrection.

9:36 "And taking a child in his arms..." Children were lowest on the ladder of social prestige in Jesus' time. Jesus welcomes the child in front of his disciples to illustrate that there is no meritocracy in the kingdom of heaven. Until we learn that we are the least, and cannot earn our way into God's favour, we will always misunderstand Jesus and his kingdom.

9:48 "Where their worm does not die..."

This is a striking and strange picture of hell (Heb. Gehenna), the place of eternal punishment. It is clearly the opposite destination of the kingdom of God (v.47), and is the natural and fitting conclusion for sin. This particular phrase about the undying worm and unquenchable fire comes from the very last words of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 66:24), where the LORD promises that those who do not enter into the new heaven and new earth will have no share with God's people, and will instead be utterly rejected.

9:49 "For everyone will be salted with fire..."

This phrase, as strange as it is to our contemporary ears, is an image of offering sacrifices to God. Though there are very few direct references in the Old Testament to this fact, in Ezekiel 43:24 the LORD states "the priests shall sprinkle salt on [the offerings] and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD" as part of the restored temple system after the exile. Here in Mark then, Jesus is making an uncompromising statement about the nature of discipleship.

9:50 "If the salt has lost its saltiness..."

Jesus appears to be mixing his metaphors here, and uses the image of salt again, but this time to refer to the beneficial nature of salt as a preservative or flavourer (cf. Matt 5:13). Being salty, in this case, means bringing the sweet savour of God's gospel to everything that we do. See Colossians 4:6 for another example.



Mark 10:1-31

After teaching his disciples verbally what it means to follow him in chapter 8:34-9:1, Jesus then gives them some real life examples through the people they encounter. In this passage issues involving some of society's biggest priorities are brought to Jesus. The importance of marriage, children, wealth, and their role in the Kingdom of God are all presented to him as questions. And he uses this opportunity to teach his disciples and us what taking up one's cross can actually look like, how we are supposed to approach the kingdom and its king, and who is ultimately responsible for saving us.

Study #4

Mark 10:1-31



Living a life for Christ: Marriage and Divorce

10:1 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. *2* And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" *3* He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" *4* They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." *5* And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. *6* But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' *7* 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, *8* and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. *9* What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." *10* And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. *11* And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, *12* and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Living a life for Christ: Children and Meekness

13 And they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. *14* But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. *15* Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." *16* And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Living a life for Christ: Wealth and Sacrifice

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" *18* And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. *19* You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" *20* And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." *21* And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." *22* Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" *24* And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! *25* It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." *26* And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" *27* Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." *28* Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." *29* Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, *30* who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. *31* But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 38.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What are some examples in this passage you can see that are people “taking up their crosses” or needing to?
- Which of the Ten Commandments do Jesus and the rich man discuss? Which ones do they not talk about and why?
- How do Jesus’ answers to his questioners show where his source of wisdom is?

C *What’s the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

10:2 “...to test him asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’”

Again the Pharisees bring a legal challenge to Jesus in an effort to trap him, demonstrating similarly to chapter 7:7-12 that their understanding of the law comes from a hardness of their own hearts and not of a love of God or his word. Jesus points out that the Mosaic law was given to them as an exception rather than the way God intended for us to be with each other in marriage. The concept of divorce is not a new one, even in the days of Jesus. In the conversation Moses “allows” the practice but does not command it, meaning that the Old Testament laws regarding the tradition are there to regulate an already existing custom; rather than create it or mandate it. While there are legitimate grounds for divorce given in the Old Testament, Jesus’ answer purposefully emphasizes the biblical teaching of Genesis. Jesus shows from scripture that before understanding divorce we first should understand both marriage and reconciliation.

10:14 “...Let the children come to me...”, 24 “...But Jesus said to them again, “Children...”

This passage loses a bit of its nuance when translated into English since we use such a broad term like children to describe many age groups. The passage actually uses different words for “children” in the separate parts of the passage. When Jesus is teaching in verses 13-16 the original word is much closer to “Infant” or “new-born” in meaning. Signifying the children’s complete and utter dependance and helplessness. Later in the passage Jesus uses a different word when talking to his disciples, its meaning being closer to what we would consider a child in age, the word also carries with it the implication of being precious to the one speaking.

10:25 “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle...”

This saying bears some similarities to some ancient rabbinic writings signifying that something is both very unusual and very difficult to do - e.g. In the Talmud (a book of rabbinic laws) the phrase “an elephant passing through the eye of a needle” is used twice to signify the impossible. Some scholars interpret the “needle’s eye” as a reference to a narrow pedestrian gateway but there is no historical evidence to support this interpretation. Jesus is rather teaching how truly impossible it is for anyone to save themselves by their own effort.



Mark 10:32-52

Since Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:29), there has been a distinct shift in Mark's story. Jesus and his disciples have turned their feet towards Jerusalem, the royal city, where King David historically dwelt. That journey is nearly at its end. But before Jesus enters Jerusalem, he takes another opportunity to show everyone what sort of king he is.

Last week's passage focused on obedience to God; coming to him as humble children who know that they are utterly dependent on him. With today's passage, we return to the heart of how this is so: King Jesus the God-man came to serve us, and give his life as a ransom for us. The disciples are still preoccupied with the glory of Jesus' kingship, and so they ask the wrong question, jockeying for prestige. Instead they should have been like Bartimaeus, who came to his king in complete humility and trust, simply hoping to be healed.



Study #5

Mark 10:32-52

JESUS, SON OF
DAVID, HAVE
MERCY ON ME!

32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." 50 And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?
If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 46.

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D *A few questions to consider*

- What is Jesus' destination? What do you know about Jerusalem?
- What question does Jesus ask twice in this passage?
- In vv.33-34 Jesus speaks about his death a third time. In vv.39-44 Jesus speaks about his death a fourth time. How does he talk about it?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 46.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Why were the disciples amazed and why might the crowd of followers be afraid (v.32)?? How does Jesus' destination and what he says in vv.33-34 figure into this?
- Jesus has called himself the "Son of Man" quite regularly. Read Daniel 7:13-14 (again). How does Jesus' royal identity come into focus in this passage? How does this help us appreciate v.45?
- How does Jesus' question (v.36, and v.51) connect the different episodes in the passage?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Jesus speaks in detail about the manner of his death, and he also speaks about the character of his death. What does it mean to say that Jesus' death is:
 - A cup?
 - A baptism?
 - A ransom?
- James and John ask for glory. What should they have asked for? What does this tell us about the ongoing life of discipleship? How does Jesus respond to the disciples' selfishness?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- If you have been ransomed from the kingdom of sin and death (Col 1:13-14), then your life is one of freedom from bondage, to serve in the way that Jesus served, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Why is it important that we see Christian service in this way?
- What do you want Jesus to do for you? How is Bartimaeus, and Jesus' response to him a help to you?
- The source of healing is trusting in Jesus. The result of healing is following him further down the road. How do you see this at work in your life?

STUDY NOTES

10:33-34 "the Son of Man will be delivered over..."

This is the third time that Jesus foretells his own death, and with each time the specificity of what will happen grows (8:31; 9:31). All of Jesus' predictions are fulfilled in Mark 14-16, where he is arrested by the Sanhedrin (14:43), given over to the Romans (15:1), mocked (15:20), spit on (15:19), flogged (15:15), and eventually put to death. Though Mark's telling of the resurrection in chapter 16 is indirect, Jesus' words here clearly spell out what the fulfillment and conclusion of his death is: resurrection. The manner in which Jesus suffers is captured perfectly by the Suffering Servant songs of Isaiah, where the LORD gave Isaiah a vision of one who would come and heal his people by suffering on their behalf (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). The final song in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is also the background to the crucifixion itself in Mark 15.

10:38 "The cup that I drink you will drink..."

This reference from Jesus is to the prophetic cup of wrath or judgement. It is an image of God's appropriate response to human sin. It is depicted in Old Testament passages like Jeremiah 25:15-29 or Ezekiel 23:31-24, among others. The same imagery is used in the book of Revelation to speak about God's final judgement (Rev 16:19).

10:38 "...the baptism with which I am baptized..."

Baptism during Jesus' time, as seen in the ministry of John the Baptist, was a ceremonial cleansing, often used to express repentance. The word "baptism" could also more generally mean submersion in deep water, or even drowning, making Jesus' words a vivid picture of death. Because Jesus was going to the Cross as the perfect representative of humanity, his death was both a cleansing, and also a passage through death into new life, just as the flood waters were for Noah and his family (1 Peter 3:20-22).

10:46 "A blind beggar, the son of Timaeus..."

Though physically blind, Bartimaeus has profound spiritual eyesight, and is able to see Jesus for who he is: the Son of David. Because of his faith, Bartimaeus is healed. Importantly, his faith does not come from seeing, but from hearing about Jesus. A blind man receiving sight was also significantly present just before Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ in 8:29. The fact that Mark makes an effort to name the father of Bartimaeus is interesting, but can probably just be considered an explanation for his original Gentile audience since Bar + timaeus in Aramaic means "son of Timaeus."

10:47 "Son of David"

This title is given to Jesus only at this moment in the gospel of Mark. It is hugely significant one, particularly as Jesus' draws near to David's city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the political and spiritual center of Israel, so for Bartimaeus to call Jesus a Son of David, is essentially to call him king. The Son of David would be the one would fulfill God's promise in 2 Samuel 7:13 to establish an eternal kingdom.



Mark 11:1-33

The previous passage hinted at a change in Jesus' attitude concerning secrecy. It was surprising to hear Bartimaeus twice call out to Jesus using the title "Son of David", a title with clear messianic, royal and nationalistic overtones. It was even more surprising that Jesus let the use of the title go unchallenged. Now we find Jesus deliberately and openly moving things quite a bit further. It's Passover, Jerusalem is horribly overcrowded, and, as John's gospel shows, Jesus could easily have come into the city unnoticed if he had wished. Instead, he uses the occasion to bring to a head the question of who he is and how he relates to Israel.



Study #6

Mark 11:1-33

The Triumphal Procession

11:1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" 4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

First Entry to Temple

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus Curses the fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

Second Entry—Jesus' Demonstration in the Temple

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Third Entry—The Authority of Jesus Challenged

27 And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, 28 and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" 29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." 31 And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'From man?'"—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?
If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 55.

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D *A few questions to consider*

- Who are “they” in 11:1 and who were the ones shouting “Hosanna!” in 11:9-10?
- Throughout this passage, with whom do the sympathies of the crowds lay?
- What was Jesus’ complaint concerning the temple in 11:15-19?
- 11:23-25 lists several conditions for effective prayer. What are they?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 55.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Mark's description of the triumphal procession in 11:1-10 is long and detailed. What things is he trying to emphasize? (If in doubt, consider Num 19:2; 1 Kings 1:38; 2 Kings 9:13; Psalm 118:26; Zech 9:9)
- Was Jesus the kind of Messiah the people shouting "Hosanna!" were looking for?
- The cursing of the fig tree is considered one of the most difficult stories in the bible. Why do you think that is?
- Was Jesus' counter-question in 11:29-30 just a clever ploy to side-step an uncomfortable question by the Jewish authorities, or was there more to it? What problem did Jesus' question raise for the Jewish authorities?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Mark 11:1-25 describes three significant symbolic actions. What are they? What is Jesus doing in Jerusalem? And why does it matter? (If you have any trouble with this, consider Jer 8:13; 23:5-6; Zech 9:9-10; Hos 9:10; Mal 3:1-4)
- In view of Jesus' comments in 11:23-24, can we attribute all unanswered prayer to lack of faith or lack of forgiveness? (Consider James 4:3; 1 John 5:14)
- How do Jesus' very public actions in this passage help us better understand the more secretive aspects of his prior behavior?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

A few questions to consider

- Jesus' judgment on the temple and ancient Israel is an interesting historical fact, but does it have any application to us? Can't we safely ignore it?
- How should Mark 11:20-25 influence our prayer life?
- What exactly does the command to forgive require of us? And are we even capable of the kind of forgiveness God offers to us?

STUDY NOTES

11:9-10 *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”*

Taken from Psalm 118:25-26, this is a pilgrimage psalm about going up to Jerusalem and the temple. Hosanna is a transliteration from Hebrew of “save us, we pray” from Psalm 118:25, but by Jesus’ time Hosanna had passed into more general use as a shout of praise, like “Hallelujah”. “Blessed is he who comes” was a form of greeting, like “Welcome”, to someone arriving at the temple. The potentially dangerous part of the chant, because of its messianic overtones, was the phrase “the coming kingdom of our father David”, which was not part of Psalm 118.

11:13 *“... he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs”*

This event happened at Passover, several months before the normal development of mature leaves and ripe fruit. Despite that, this fig tree was in leaf (v.13). Its appearance held out the promise of ripe fruit, but it failed to deliver. The OT prophets used the fig tree as a metaphor for Israel (Jeremiah 8:13; 24:1-10; Hosea 9:10, 16-17; Micah 7:1).

11:15 *“... the temple”*

The temple in Jerusalem was the focal point of the religious, political, social and economic life of Israel. It was a massive structure, with the whole complex of buildings occupying about thirty-six acres. It contained four separate “courts” organized in concentric rings of successive holiness: the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of the Israelites, and the Court of the Priests. Where the “temple” is mentioned in this passage, it is a reference to the Court of the Gentiles, the huge outer courtyard where non-Jews were allowed.

11:17 *“...Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”*

This is a conflation of Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Isaiah 56 is a call to justice and righteousness, with the promise that God’s soon-coming salvation would be marked by inclusive worship with the foreigner, the eunuch, and the outcasts of Israel who keep the covenant. In Jeremiah 7:11, after calling for justice and righteousness, God noted the corruption of the covenant, and asked the prophet, “Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers ...?”. Jesus’ use of this phrase would likely have been understood as particularly harsh criticism of the temple authorities, suggesting disrespect for God’s house and abuse of the sanctuary.

11:27 *“... the chief priests and the scribes and the elders”*

The chief priests and the scribes and the elders are the three main power groups who made up the Sanhedrin (the “elders” being the leading representatives of the lay nobility).

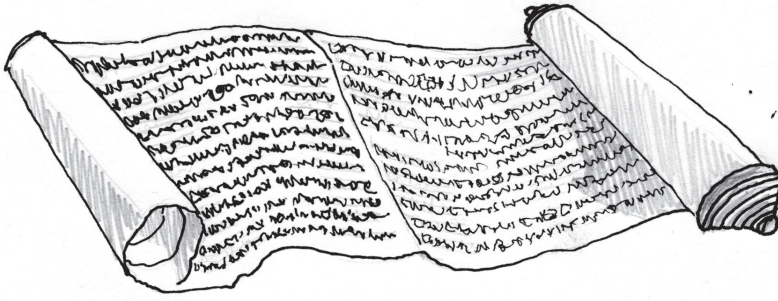


Mark 12:1-27

Following on from Jesus' kingly entry into the city of Jerusalem and his judgment of the Jewish nation, the enemies of Christ decide it's a good time to go toe to toe with him verbally. In this passage three different groups challenge Jesus with questions and insincere inquiries in attempts to trap, incriminate, and alienate him from the crowds. As we are so often tempted to do, the enemies of Jesus attempt to put him on trial. But knowing both their true intent and hearts Jesus responds to these inquisitions with his kingly authority. Jesus' answers here pass judgment on these groups, pulling apart their desires and intentions. Mark makes sure that we as readers act as witnesses in this metaphorical courtroom. Emphasizing that we witness both the result of the verbal sparring, and the deeper issues Jesus brings up in his responses.

Study #7

Mark 12:1-27



Jesus spars with the Pharisees and Herodians

12:1 And he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. **2** When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. **3** And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **4** Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. **5** And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. **6** He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ **7** But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ **8** And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. **9** What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. **10** Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
11 this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?”

12 And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. **14** And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” **15** But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” **16** And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar’s.” **17** Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.

12:18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, **19** “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. **20** There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. **21** And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. **22** And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. **23** In the resurrection, when they

rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

24 Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? **25** For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. **26** And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? **27** He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 65.

Ⓐ *Pray*

Ⓑ *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

Ⓒ *A few questions to consider*

- Who is the “them” in v.1? How many different groups of listeners or opponents can you find in this passage?
- What source does Jesus draw from to answer the various arguments brought to him?
- What are some of the desires or motivations revealed in this passage?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 65.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What do you make of the way Jesus answers these questions?
- How do the various groups answer Jesus' cross-examination after he turns the tables on them?
- The quote in vv.10-11 is from Psalm 118:22-23, where the cornerstone is Israel. How does this quote change in meaning with the parable in vv1-9?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Previously the Gospel of Mark has shown the various ways in which people have rejected God, John the Baptist, and now Jesus. How does this help us understand the parable in vv.1-11? Why then is the Pharisees' reaction in v.12 so damning? Does this mean they are beyond salvation?
- There is more to the conversation about coins than just taxation and Roman rule. What point is Christ making about the cost and totality of following God?
- The Sadducees bring a logical paradox in an attempt to confound Jesus. What is the actual source of their dispute with Christ? What are the implications of Jesus' answer "He is not God of the dead, but of the living"?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- How are we tempted to put God on trial? What happens in your life when you receive an answer from him you don't like or did not expect?
- How do we make sure that we don't become like the unruly tenants, violently opposing God at every instinct?
- The Sadducees bring to Jesus a big question which touches on our attachments in life, even to good godly things. How does Jesus' answer direct your eyes towards his new creation?
- How does Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and Herodians about laws make us deal with the idea of living in this world while still being citizens of the kingdom of heaven?

STUDY NOTES

Mark 12:1 "...A man planted a vineyard..."

Used symbolically the vineyard was the emblem of prosperity and peace among ancient Hebrews. More particularly it symbolized the chosen people of God. The vine which God had taken out of Egypt (Ps 80:8-14; Is 5:1-5) and planted in particularly lush protected lands. There are no fewer than 5 parables of Jesus that are related to vines and their cultivation (Lk. 13:6-9, Mt. 20:1-16, Mt. 9:17, Mt. 21:33-41; Mk. 12:1-11; Lk 20:9-18) Of particular significance is perhaps the parable in John 15, where Jesus describes himself as the true vine which all believers are to be in relationship with.

Mark 12:10 "...has become the cornerstone;..."

The New Testament references to this proverbial cornerstone draw their original meaning from a number of Old Testament verses, in particular Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 28:16. A cornerstone itself being most likely a reference to the final stone that would be placed at the top of a constructed arch which would hold the structure together and complete the full shape. In its original context the cornerstone represented vindication on behalf of Israel at God's hands (Psalm 118) and the enduring presence of God as the core of the temple (Is 28). However the meaning is shifted in the New Testament to emphasize both Christ's central importance to the world as its savior and his rejection at the hands of the world.

Mark 12:14 "...Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?..."

Regular taxation payments were not unfamiliar to Israel since tribute was required to maintain the Tabernacle and later the Temple. However in NT times Israel was ruled and taxed by the invading nation of Rome. Payments were given to Roman provinces in Roman coins as a form of tribute for governance. The trap the Pharisees are attempting to set for Jesus is rather nefarious and has to do with political treason. If Jesus said that they weren't supposed to pay taxes it would be similar to him saying that Caesar is not the king, which in Ancient Rome is an offense punishable by death. Or if Jesus insists that they must pay taxes the crowds around him would immediately dislike his teaching since they saw Rome as a hostile conquering nation.

Mark 12:18 "...And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection..."

While this is the first written mention of the Sadducees in Mark's gospel, they were at the time of Christ, one of, if not the most, prominent political and religious groups in Israel. Even though the role of adversary frequently falls on the shoulders of the Pharisees and Herodians, it was the Sadducees that occupied the majority of the High Council with the Chief Priest himself being a Sadducee. Often considered to be more commonly philosophers than priests themselves, the Sadducees set themselves apart from other Jewish religious groups by rejecting all beliefs in the afterlife, resurrection and eternal judgment.



Mark 12:28-44

We are coming to the end of another block of teaching, which began in 11:27, just after Jesus had officially condemned the temple as a fruitless tree. As Jesus and his disciples are walking in the temple grounds, he is confronted by the religious leadership of that temple, and they engage him in an extended debate, seeking to trip him up and undermine his teaching.

In today's passage, Jesus answers an earnest question from one of these religious men - which silences everyone - and asks a question of his own, demonstrating how little they understand God's word. This in turn leads to a condemnation of their authority, because they do not understand God's ways, chasing after prestige rather than justice. The episode closes with an object lesson, as the disciples observe a poor woman giving all she has to God, living out the very commandment the scribes pretend to obey.

Study #8

Mark 12:28-44



28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" 37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly. 38 And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." 41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 74.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- In response to the pious scribe, Jesus quotes two Old Testament passages.
 - What are they?
 - Why are they important?
 - Why is the order important?
- The scribe agrees with Jesus and says that these two commandments are more important than the entire sacrificial system. How does this relate to what Jesus has been teaching about the temple? Why do you think this answer is what silences Jesus' interrogators?
- Why do vv.38-40 come before vv.41-44? What does this have to do with Jesus' teaching in vv.29-34?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

12:29 "Here O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

This confessional prayer Shema, comes from Deuteronomy 6, and is a foundational piece of Israel's covenant with the Lord. The summary of the rules which God gave to his people is love. And the use of the word "love" signifies deep loyalty and covenant commitment. It works itself out in the different ways we love:

- **Heart.** The heart is the seat of one's inner being. This includes not only the emotions, but also the intellect and will; the very essence of a person's engagement with the world.
- **Soul.** This word is closely connected to the idea of life's breath (see Genesis 2:7 for example). The soul yearns and thirsts after things, and is the source of a person's desires and personality.
- **Mind.** The mind is the seat of intellection and understanding, and is connected or subservient to the heart.
- **Strength.** This word highlights the external aspects of our personhood: all of our resources, economic, social and physical that are involved in loving God.

12:33 "All whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Under the old covenant, there was an elaborate system of sacrifices that God's people would carry out in order to have right relationship with God (see the first seven chapters of Leviticus for an example of this). Here, the scribe is rightly putting the sacrificial system in its place, recognizing that love of God and neighbour is the reason why God's people were to engage in specific religious practices.

12:35 "the Son of David"

This title was directly applied to Jesus by Bartimaeus in 10:47, and the crowds in 11:10 seemed to be hinting at it, but Jesus has never claimed the title explicitly for himself. Here Jesus is being a bit sneaky, because the discussion seems to be primarily about Jesus' authority in interpreting Scripture, but because his disciples (and the reader) know that Jesus is the Christ, he is making an astonishing claim to lordship.

12:40 "who devour widows' houses..."

The vulnerability of widows is a recurring ethical theme throughout the Old Testament, and God's law intentional makes provisions for the care and inclusion of widows (e.g. Exod 22:22; Deut 14:29). Israel's failure to care for the widow was a significant symptom of Israel's sin in the prophets (e.g. Ezek 22:7). The failure of the scribes to care for the most vulnerable is indicative of the deep rot in their hearts, in spite of their pious religious observance.

12:41 "opposite the treasury..."

Everything given to the treasury would have gone to support the temple system. The donation that this woman was giving would have helped purchase sacrifices, or materials for offering up sacrifices. Here Mark is probably talking about the collection boxes in the Court of Women, where Jewish women were allowed to gather for worship.

12:42 "two copper coins..."

Copper coins were the smallest unit of currency, and one coin represented less than 1/100th of a denarius, where a denarius was a fair day's wage. The amount that the widow was giving was strikingly small.



Mark 13

This chapter brings together the destruction of the temple, plus Jesus' own death, exaltation and enthronement, plus Jesus' second coming at the end of the age. The temple in Jerusalem represented national Israel, and its destruction was a shocking, cataclysmic event. But the story doesn't end there. Jesus is the embodiment of Israel, replacing national Israel and fulfilling the role of which national Israel proved incapable. For that reason, the destruction of the temple was far more than just a devastating national event—it was a symbol of the end of the old, evil age and the beginning of the new age. The destruction of the temple was part of the birth pangs of the coming kingdom. In this passage, Jesus leaves the temple, never to return, and prepares his disciples for what is to follow. While his disciples will share in his suffering, Jesus confidently assures them of ultimate victory.

Study #9

Mark 13



Destruction of the Temple

13:1 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” *2* And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, *4* “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” *5* And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. *6* Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. *7* And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. *8* For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

9 “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. *10* And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. *11* And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. *12* And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. *13* And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

14 “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. *15* Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, *16* and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. *17* And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! *18* Pray that it may not happen in winter. *19* For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. *20* And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. *21* And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. *22* For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. *23* But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, *25* and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. *26* And then

they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Second Coming

32 “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 83.

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

C *A few questions to consider*

- What two questions from the disciples did Jesus begin to answer in 13:5?
- What command words does Jesus use in his teaching to his disciples, and how would you characterize the overall tone of his teaching?
- What advice does Jesus give his disciples regarding the second coming?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 83.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Briefly summarize the main idea for each section of Jesus' answer concerning the destruction of the temple—vv.5-8, vv.9-13, vv.14-23, vv.24-27 & vv.28-31.
- How does Jesus finally answer the disciple's question about the timing of the destruction of the temple?
- What is the lesson of the fig tree (13:28-29) in this context?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A *Thinking Theologically*

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B *A few questions to consider*

- What is the significance of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple? And what links the destruction of the temple with Jesus' second coming?
- What does the Daniel 7 reference (13:26) have to do with the destruction of the temple? (See Study Notes on 13:24-26)
- How does this passage show Mark telling the story of Jesus as the story of Israel and the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures? How does it help us see that the Cross is the center point of human history?

STUDY NOTES

13:1-2 “...the temple”

The temple in Jerusalem was the focal point of the religious, political, social and economic life of Israel, and it was the place where God was thought to have dwelt with his people. The temple was a powerful symbol of the entire existing order, of everything it meant to be a Jew. Within a generation of Jesus' life, the Romans conducted a brutal five-month siege of Jerusalem and set up their own symbols of authority in the temple before destroying it. The temple has never been re-built.

13:3 “...he sat on the Mount of Olives”

This recalls Ezekiel's vision of the departing glory of God as it left the temple, moving out toward the Mount of Olives and stopping there briefly before completely abandoning the temple (Ezek 11:22-23).

13:14 “...the abomination of desolation”

This expression comes from several places in Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11) that looked ahead to 167 BC, when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple sanctuary by erecting a pagan altar within it, and stopped the regular burnt offering. It is unclear what event or events Jesus refers to in our context, but it must in some way be a repetition of the sacrilege of 167 BC—something that presents a serious threat to the temple.

13:24 “...the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light”

This has numerous possible OT parallels, but the wording is most closely related to the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 13:10, part of the oracle against Babylon, contemplating imminent political upheaval involving the overthrow of a world power.

13:25 “...the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken”

This also has numerous possible OT parallels, but the wording is most closely related to the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 34:4, which is about the judgment that God is going to bring on all nations, but particularly on the nation of Edom. It is, once again, the language of political upheaval.

13:26 “...the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory”

This is the language of Daniel 7:13-14, and Daniel's vision is one of enthronement. In the context of our passage, Jesus, the Son of Man, replaces national Israel as the focus of the God's purpose. This is imagery of setting up a new kingship to replace the failed regimes of previous empires. The word “coming” is not about coming to earth; it is coming to the throne of God to be given authority over all nations. Similar language is used in 14:62, where Jesus, speaking to the high priest, says, “you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

13:27 “...gather his elect from the four winds”

This is the language of Deuteronomy 30:4 and Zechariah 2:6, both being passages about the regathering of Israel after the exile.

13:29 “...you will know that he is near”

The rendering “he is near” in the ESV is based on the translator's understanding that this is referring to the second coming. The better translation would be “it is near”, with the “it” referring to the destruction of the temple.

13:32 “...that day or that hour”

This expression is best understood as referring to the *parousia*, the second coming of Christ. There is no mention of a singular day anywhere in the rest of the chapter that could be the antecedent of “that day”. The NT has several other instances where “that day” has no antecedent but is understood to refer to the day of judgment (Matt 7:22; Luke 10:12; 2 Tim 1:12, 18; 4:8; 1 Cor 3:13; Heb 10:25). The abrupt change of topic in 13:32-37 is also indicated by: (a) the opening with the words “but concerning”, a standard formula for changing subjects (1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1); and (b) the known of v1-31 vs. the unknown day and hour of v32-37. It should also be noted that the parallel passage in Matthew makes this change clear with the express use of the word “parousia” (translated “coming”: Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39).



Mark 14:1-25

The intense pace Mark has set since Jesus and his followers entered Jerusalem now continues as we come to one of the most famous sections in the New Testament. Jesus' last few days which include: the last supper, the abandonment of his followers, the miscarriage of justice at his trial, his death and subsequent resurrection. Our familiarity with this well known part of the Gospel can lead us to sometimes miss some of the beautiful details and purpose with which Mark writes this piece of Scripture. In our passage we have a fantastic example of what it looks like to love Christ. And amidst this setting Jesus also draws from the Old Testament to teach on his own death and what that ultimately means for us. His triumphant yet grim mission is now approaching its climax in the gospel of Mark.

Study #10

Mark 14:1-25



Burial Preoccupations

14:1 It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, **2** for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

14:3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. **4** There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? **5** For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. **6** But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. **7** For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. **8** She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. **9** And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

The Last Supper

14:12 And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” **13** And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, **14** and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ **15** And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” **16** And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

14:17 And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. **18** And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” **19** They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” **20** He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. **21** For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

14:22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” **23** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. **24** And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. **25** Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.”

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 92.

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D *A few questions to consider*

- What are some specific motivations mentioned in this passage?
- What are some of the dates or time periods given in this passage? Why might the author have included them?
- Why does Jesus praise the woman in verse 6?

STUDY NOTES

Mark 14:1 "It was now two days before the Passover..."

The Passover is one of the most important events and observances of the Jewish calendar. It marks the commemoration of Exodus 12, where the Jews were saved from bondage by God through the final plague upon the nation of Egypt and the Jews subsequent escape. In the final plague God warned that he would kill all firstborns within the country unless doorways were marked with the blood of a pure firstborn lamb. If people obeyed the house would then be passed over from judgment. It is not by accident that Jesus gathers his closest disciples to partake in the traditional Passover meal for his last supper. He now becomes the passover lamb, sacrificing himself for our deaths and buying our freedom from the oppression of sin by his blood of the new covenant.

Mark 14:3 "...an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard..."

To retain fragrance, ointment was kept in sealed alabaster flasks which had to be broken in order to release their contents. This particular flask may have been passed from generation to generation as a family heirloom. Either way the jar represents extraordinary value, potentially costing up to or more than a year's total wages at the time.

Mark 14:8 "...she has anointed my body beforehand for burial..."

A common feature of Jewish burials, in the time of Jesus, is a certain level of respect and preparation for the recently deceased. Usually the corpse was immediately anointed with aromatic oils, clothed in linens which were lined with more herbs, and then had their heads covered in a scarf. While what the woman does in verse 14 breaks some tradition, when it comes to timing, Jesus nonetheless warmly acknowledges the action and again predicts his upcoming death, this time adding an explicit reference to his own burial.

Mark 14:21 "...For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him..."

Jesus' words here reveal the divine and human outworkings side by side. "The Son of Man will go..." he says, referring to the will of God set out in scripture (Is 53:8-12, Ps 22:1-7, Dan 7:21,25). But referring to the agency of Judas he says, "Woe to that man..." We should draw comfort from the fact that God works out his purpose even through wicked men like Judas who betray him. God is not thwarted by plans of evil, instead he brings good out of those plans. Nonetheless the sovereign will of God does not eliminate human accountability for actions like those of Judas.

Mark 14:24 "...Which is poured out for many..."

This verse bears a tremendous weight of importance for humanity. The words here to notice are 'for' and 'many'. The use of the preposition "for" means that Jesus' blood or death is on 'behalf of' or 'in the place of others'. Just as the blood of the lambs spared the covenant people and made possible their escape from Egypt, so too the blood of God's beloved Son will be shed for the protection and liberation of the many people of God under a new covenant.

Mark 14:25 "...When I drink it anew in the kingdom of God..."

This is the last occasion of his earthly life when Jesus shall drink wine, the everyday beverage of the Jews. Not until the heavenly banquet (Isaiah 25:6) of the Messiah, would Jesus drink wine again. But it is not ordinary wine, but 'new' which is appropriate in the 'new heaven' and 'new earth' where God has made all things 'new' (Revelation 21:1-5).



Mark 14:26-52

We are drawing near to Jesus' final hours of earthly ministry. He has foretold his death many times, and in last week's passage, has even been anointed for his death. But just before his betrayal and arrest, Jesus withdraws one last time to pray to his Father. It is a remarkable moment of intimacy, humanity, and obedience. Jesus knows that he will be raised again, but he is still terrified of what he knows is coming, and so he gives it up to the Father in prayer, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Though everyone else might fall away, Christ as the true Israel, remains faithful.

Study #11

Mark 14:26-52



26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same. 32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." 35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." 37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. 41 And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." 43 And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." 45 And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 46 And they laid hands on him and seized him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." 50 And they all left him and fled. 51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 100.

A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

C A few questions to consider

- What does it mean that Jesus prayed “the hour might pass from him”?
- Who is all represented with the betrayal and arrest of Jesus?
- If the crowd came with “swords and clubs” (v.43), what were they expecting?

STUDY NOTES

14:26-27 "The Mount of Olives... 'I will strike the shepherd...'"

The Mount of Olives has been mentioned once before in 11:1, with the beginning of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and its mention in both places is surely intentional. In Ezekiel's first vision of the LORD giving Israel a new heart, he sees the glory of the LORD residing on a mountain east of the city of Jerusalem (Ezek 11:23), which likely refers to the Mount of Olives. Significantly, the Mount of Olives is also the location in Zechariah 14 where the LORD wages his final war against the nations, after which "the LORD will be king over all the earth" (Zech 14:9). This connection to Zechariah coincides nicely with Jesus' quotation of Zechariah 13:7 in Mark 14:27. In this oracle God promises that he will strike the shepherd, out of which a true remnant will be delivered and refined to be God's people. Jesus' interpretation of Zechariah 13:7 gives us a unique glimpse into his own understanding of his suffering on the Cross.

14:28 "I will go before you to Galilee"

The return to Galilee is an important signal that Jesus' ministry not only began but also will end there, rather than in Jerusalem. It is both a promise of resurrection victory, and a judgement of the Temple system located in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place of Jesus' rejection and death, Galilee the place of Jesus victory.

14:34 "My soul is very sorrowful..."

This is a direct quotation of the refrain from the Greek version of Psalms 42 and 43, which the ESV translates as "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" As Jesus finally approaches his death, he begins to be "greatly distressed and troubled," which paints a striking picture of his humanity. These psalms are a poignant reminder on where Christ's help comes from in the midst of his deepest distress, and remind us that his sacrifice on the Cross was tremendous.

14:36 "Remove this cup from me..."

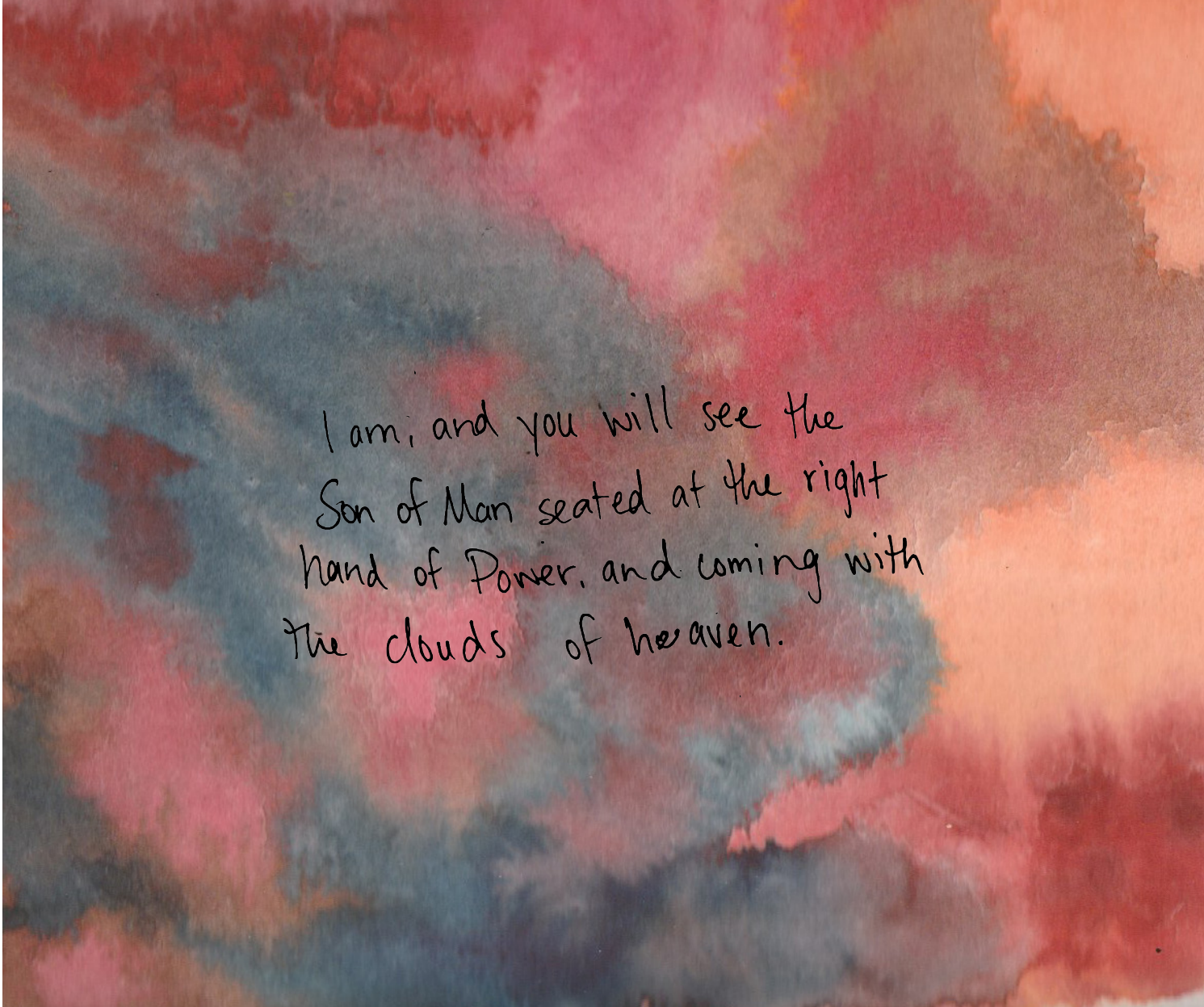
We have encountered this image before, in Mark 10:39. Several prophets in the Old Testament spoke of God's just wrath against sin as a cup of wrath, including Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jeremiah 25:15-29 or Ezekiel 23:31-24). From Jesus' prayer here, it is clear that his death on the Cross was to bear God's wrath for our sin.

14:43 "The chief priests and the scribes and the elders..."

As mentioned in other studies, this list refers to the Sanhedrin, the institutional head of the Temple system. Their orders to a gang armed with clubs and swords demonstrate a cowardly rejection of Jesus.

14:51 "And a young man followed him..."

This somewhat unusual final detail has every reader a little bit perplexed. The main difficulty is that it is not entirely clear what the purpose of its inclusion is. Some think that this is Mark obliquely referring to himself in the story, or at the very least a prominent member of the early community who would have been known from this detail alone, and counted as an eyewitness to the proceedings. It is worth noting that this young man is described as a *neaniskos*, which is a Greek word usually used in the Old Testament to describe a strong young man typically in military service. As such, the man could serve as a dramatic representation of the complete abandonment of Jesus. From here, some commentators have seen an allusion to Amos 2:16, which promises that none will be able to stand at the day of judgement.



I am, and you will see the
Son of Man seated at the right
hand of Power, and coming with
the clouds of heaven.

Mark 14:53-72

So far in Mark's gospel, Jesus has been firmly in control of the flow of events, to the point of deliberately provoking the Jerusalem officials with his symbolic actions, claiming (along with John the Baptist) authority from heaven, and, in the parable of the vineyard, casting the Jerusalem officials in the role of the defaulting tenants and himself in the role of the only son of the owner, God. Now on trial before the Sanhedrin, where Jesus appears to have become a passive character in the hands of others, everything continues to unfold according to divine plan. The Jerusalem officials may think they are finally in control, but this is really just the out-working of Jesus' numerous passion predictions: he "must suffer many things, and be rejected... and be killed" (8:31); he will "be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him" (9:31); and "they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles" (10:33).

Study #12

Mark 14:53-72



Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

53 And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. 54 And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. 55 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. 56 For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. 57 And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, 58 “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” 59 Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” 61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” 63 And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.

Peter Denies Jesus

66 And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” 68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. 69 And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” 71 But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” 72 And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 108.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Why did the high priest view as blasphemous the answer given by Jesus in 14:62?
- How might the high priest “see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven”? (Consider Dan 7:13-14; Psalm 110:1)
- In what way was the high priest himself judged?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

14:53 “...the chief priests and the elders and the scribes

The chief priests and the elders and the scribes are the three main power groups who made up the Sanhedrin (the “elders” being the leading representatives of the lay nobility). This was a comprehensive rejection of Jesus by all the leading representatives of God’s people Israel—Jesus was rejected by everyone who was anyone in that society.

14:58 “...I will destroy this temple”

It would be hard to over-estimate the importance of the temple in Jerusalem to Jews of Jesus’ time. It was the focal point of Israelite life. It was where all important religious, political, legal and social functions took place. In the words of Ben Meyer, “To evoke, even conditionally, the destruction of this Temple was to touch not just stone and gold, and not only the general well-being, but history and hope, national identity, self-understanding and pride”. For Jesus to be seen as anti-temple was almost certain to turn public opinion against him.

14:58 “...made with hands”

This expression translates the Greek word *cheiropoiētos*, which is used fourteen times in the Greek translation of the OT, each time referring to idols.

14:61-62 “...the Son of the Blessed” and “... the right hand of Power”

“The Blessed” and “Power” are typical Jewish circumlocutions for God, a way of referring to the God of Israel without saying his name.

14:61 “...the Son of the Blessed”

When the high priest asks Jesus if he is claiming to be “the Son of the Blessed”, he is not asking if Jesus considers himself divine in the later Trinitarian sense. This expression was simply another way of referring to the messiah. (The early Christians, however, drawing on the fulfillment of 2 Sam 7:12-14 and Psalm 2, referred to Jesus as “Son of God” in the divine sense.)

14:62 “...Son of Man”

Taken from Daniel’s enthronement vision in Dan 7:13-14. It refers to the enthronement of “one like a son of man”, who represented, in the Daniel context, Israel as the people of God. Used here, it is Jesus, son of man, replacing national Israel as the focus of God’s purpose.

14:63 “... the high priest tore his garments”

Tearing clothes was a common expression of grief and, as here, a response to blasphemy (2 Kings 18:37; 19:1).

14:65 “... some began to spit on him”

Spitting was a way of showing their revulsion and distancing themselves from the blasphemy (Job 30:9-10; Num 12:14; Deut 25:9; and, particularly, Isa 50:6-7).

14:71. “...he began to invoke a curse on himself”

The words “on himself” do not appear in the original Greek text, and the Greek verb “to curse” (*anathematizō*), standing alone, does not mean to swear in the sense of “to invoke a curse on oneself”. The natural meaning of the Greek expression used here strongly suggests that the object of Peter’s curse was Jesus.



Mark 15:1-20

The list of injustices Jesus faces at the hands of the legal and religious systems continues to grow as he is now handed off to the Romans. His innocence and refusal to defend himself again bewilders and angers his accusers. The Roman Governor charged with overseeing his trial even becomes convinced that he has committed no crime. Yet it is this very miscarriage of justice that reveals that Jesus is king unlike any other. It is through his suffering and death that he displays his power and rule for the sake of his enemies. Rather than seeking revenge and exercising his divine power he submits to the injustice and abuse for our sakes.

Study #13

Mark 15:1-20



Suffered Under Pontius Pilate.

15:1 And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." 3 And the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Freeing a Murderer to Kill an Innocent Man.

15:6 Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. 7 And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. 8 And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. 9 And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. 12 And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" 13 And they cried out again, "Crucify him." 14 And Pilate said to them, "Why, What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Hail King of the Jews!

15:16 And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 18 And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 116.

A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

C A few questions to consider

- What are some different motivations seen in this passage?
- How does Mark emphasize Jesus' innocence in this passage?
- Why does Pilate decide to sentence Jesus?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 116.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Read Isaiah 53:1-9. How does this passage help us understand the structure and events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in Mark?
- What are some notable similarities between the two passages?
- Jesus' enemies make numerous declarations about him in this passage. What words do they unwittingly use to correctly identify him?
- What is Jesus' finally accused of in this passage? How is this different from him being called the Christ last chapter by the Sanhedrin? (See notes if you're having trouble)

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- This chapter contains some ambiguity about who is truly responsible for the death of Jesus. Where do we sit in regards to this question? Are our hands truly clean?
- Despite both his followers and the entire legal system abandoning Christ, he promises to not do the same to us. How might this encourage you when you deny his lordship in your life?
- In this passage we see some of the immense suffering and pain Christ bears at the hands of his captors. These are only a fragment of the true cost of sin on display. We rarely get such a clear picture of what our sin does to God and to others. How does the brutality of Jesus' treatment help you take sin more seriously?
- Jesus' approach to his own death on the cross marks him as an entirely unique king amongst centuries of rulers and monarchies that abuse their powers and positions. How might you use this passage to share why Jesus is a different kind of king with others?

STUDY NOTES

A Note on Mark's Crucifixion Narrative.

The writing of Jesus' passion and death in the Gospel of Mark is comparatively brief when compared to the other Gospels. Thus it is worth remembering that Mark is not a lazy or incompetent writer but is instead attempting to make a clearer point by carefully choosing the details he does include. The trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in Mark's Gospel is written in such a way that it bears heavy reference to the passage of Isaiah 53. Seven such stand-out references include: The silence of Jesus (Is 53:7), his physical appearance (Is 52:14), the mockery of him (Is 53:3), his powerlessness (Is 53:7), his innocence (Is 53:11), his death (Is 53:9) and his triumph (Is 53).

Mark 15:1 "...delivered him over to Pilate..."

Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea, serving under Emperor Tiberius from 26/27 to 36/37 AD. As governor one of his major roles was to settle legal disputes on behalf of the Roman Empire. This is why Pilate personally conducts his own investigation into the accusations of Jesus.

Mark 15:2 "...Are you the King of the Jews?"

While the Sanhedrin have found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, they are not honest enough to take his life themselves, nor is blasphemy a capital crime when it comes to Roman law. What is punishable by death is insurrection or attempting to overthrow the Emperor. This is why Pilate asks Jesus if he does indeed think himself to be King of the Jews, for at the time the official ruler of the Jews was Caesar. Jesus' admission to the title is a crime most severe in their eyes.

Mark 15:6 "Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner..."

There is some debate as to where this custom originates, whether it stems from a passage of the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish laws) or was a practice that Pilate himself undertook. Either way there is a great deal of dramatic irony at play as Barabbas, a murderer and insurrectionist against the Roman government, gets released instead of Jesus. Their crimes and proverbial innocence being a mirror reverse of one another.

Mark 15:13 "...And they cried out again, 'Crucify him.'"

The practice of crucifixion is a particularly brutal, violent, and painful invention at the hands of humanity. Crucifixion was practiced by the Romans extensively on slaves, provincial rebels, and the lowest types of criminals. It is a punishment weighted by shame in Roman culture, and has even stronger connotations for Jews. While the crucifixion of live criminals did not occur in the Old Testament, dead bodies were occasionally hung on a tree as a warning (Dt 21:22-23, Josh 10:26). Such bodies were considered to be cursed in God's eyes. This practice accounts for the many NT references to Christ's cross as a "tree" (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29. 1 Pet. 2:24), it being then a symbol of intense humiliation.

Mark 15:17 "And they clothed him in a purple cloak..."

In Roman practise, after the passing of a sentence, the soldiers had unlimited opportunities to torture and humiliate the prisoner. These soldiers make ample use of this time to further beat, whip, and mock Jesus. They first dress him in similar but twisted garments that a king or Caesar might wear, and then jokingly salute him again as they might a real ruler. While this is Jesus' third beating since the previous evening, he remains dignified in his silence until the final unemotional sentence, "Then they led him out to crucify him".



Mark 15:21-16:8

With this passage, we come to the end of the book of Mark. Mark began at a breakneck pace, moving swiftly from miracle to miracle, as Jesus lived and proclaimed the kingdom of God. But all of it was done in light of, and for the purpose of, this final passage: the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ.

Jesus had predicted his death multiple times to his disciples, and we as readers have been regularly reminded of the ominous plans which the religious authorities were crafting to put Jesus to death. And finally, brutally, the Scriptures are fulfilled, and the Son of Man's life is given as a ransom for many. But Jesus' death, as a historical fact, is inseparable from his resurrection, for he truly was, and is, the Son of God. From the sorrow of the Cross, we receive the joy of the Empty Tomb.

Study #14

Mark 15:21-16:8



15:21 And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. 22 And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. 25 And it was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” 27 And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!” 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” 40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.

5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 125.

A *Pray*

B *Read Closely*

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

C *A few questions to consider*

- There are four scenes in this passage. What is the central event of each scene? What details stand out to you in each scene?
- What is emphasized by the account of Jesus' burial in 15:42-47?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Need some help?

If you need a hand with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 125.

A *Look at the context*

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B *A few questions to consider*

- Why do you think Mark personally names so many witnesses in this passage? Which characters keep appearing, and why is that important?
- Read Psalm 22, note the similarities. How does that psalm help us understand what is going on here? How does the psalm end? See Study Notes if you need help.
- The ending of Mark is not a tidy conclusion. Why do you think this is?

C *What's the Main Idea?*

D *Stop to Pray*

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A *Living it out*

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B *A few questions to consider*

- The pain of crucifixion, and other barbarous acts, have been experienced by many, but Jesus' cry of dereliction on the cross in v.34 records the single most harrowing human experience in history. How does it, and the triumph of the resurrection help you to face the pain of sin and death?
- The women see the empty tomb, but don't know what it means. Why are the words of the messenger so important for them and for us?
- The last words of Mark record fear and silence from the disciples. How does this encourage you to respond and share the Good News that Jesus rose from the dead?
- Often people try to dismiss Jesus by remaining "neutral" about him. How does the conclusion of the gospel of Mark eliminate this possibility?
- Of all the things you've learned in Mark, what has struck you the most? How has your perspective on Jesus, or your life in him grown?

STUDY NOTES

15:21 "They compelled a passerby...to carry his cross"

Normally the condemned person would carry their own cross to the site of execution, but the beating that Jesus sustained in v.15 was so brutal that he was no longer able to.

15:23 "wine mixed with myrrh"

This would have been a narcotic drink meant to ease the pain of crucifixion. The Babylonian Talmud records that this practice was begun in obedience to Proverbs 31:6.

15:24 "They crucified him and divided his garments among them."

Roman law gave the executioners permission to distribute the last remaining possessions of the executed. Mark's telling of the event includes the crucial detail that they did this by casting lots, which is a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22. See the note on 15:34 for more about that.

15:27 "two robbers"

This probably refers to bandits or insurrectionists like Barabbas, whom we met in vv.6-15 (the Greek word here is *lēstēs*). Politically, Judea was experiencing a lot of unrest during this period, and these men may have even been part of the same gang as Barabbas. John 18:40 specifically calls Barabbas a *lēstēs*, or robber.

15:34 "Eloi, eloi, lema sabachthani?"

This cry of dereliction from Jesus is the final, and most poignant of all the Aramaic quotes we find in the gospel of Mark. Here we are getting the words of an eyewitness, seared into their memory and passed on through the ages. The words themselves are a quotation from Psalm 22 (v.1), which has a particular relevance to this passage, because it is actually a psalm that Jesus fulfills. In Mark 15 Jesus has become "scorned by mankind" (Psa 22:6), with passersby mocking and wagging their heads (22:7). The evildoers that encircle him have pierced his hands and feet (22:16), and they divide his clothes up by lots (22:18). What is most startling and significant about Psalm 22 though, is that out of agony and desolation will come deliverance, as the psalm concludes with the universal worship of the LORD, and the confession of the centurion in Mark 15.

15:35 "Behold, he is calling Elijah."

In Aramaic, "my god" and "Elijah" sound very similar, so it is understandable that the crowd would have misunderstood Jesus. During Jesus' time, Elijah was the expected agent of deliverance, both for individuals in distress, and for the nation of Israel awaiting the age to come. Because Jesus had had such a powerful ministry, the crowds might have really been expecting (or half-expecting) Elijah to appear.

15:38 "The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."

This was likely the exterior curtain to the sanctuary, which would have been more visible. This event is also corroborated by independent Jewish witnesses. Interestingly, Mark does not tell us specifically what the tearing of the curtain means. It could be taken as a symbolic condemnation of the temple, as a demonstration that Jesus is the true temple, or even as a sign that God's presence was no longer going to be contained in one place. It is probably intentionally in parallel with the tearing of the heavens in Mark 1:10.

15:39 "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

The crucifixion of Jesus is the climax of the gospel of Mark. This passage also contains a significant repetition of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1, where the heavens are torn open and God the Father announces the arrival of the Son. Now with the tearing of the temple curtain, a Gentile proclaims Jesus to be the Son. Even if the centurion didn't fully understand what he was saying, Mark surely intended his reader to hear it in this way. Jesus' ministry has been fulfilled, leaving the disciples to wait for him in Galilee.

