

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

MARK



Roger E. Dickson

2016

MARK

WRITER

John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, was the writer of this inspired New Testament document. John was his Jewish name and Mark was his Roman or Gentile name. He was possibly the son of Mary who was the sister of Barnabas (At 12:12; Cl 4:10), and thus Barnabas would have been his uncle. This may have been the young man who fled naked at the time of Jesus' trials (14:51,52).

John Mark journeyed with Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first mission journey (At 12:25 – 13:1-13). However, for some unknown reason he did not continue with the work of the mission trip, and thus, turned back from the work (At 13:13; 15:37,38). Nevertheless, eleven years later when Paul was in a Roman prison, he called for Mark who was then profitable to him for the ministry (2 Tm 4:11). He was with Paul at some time during Paul's imprisonment (Cl 4:10; Pl 24). He may have also been with Peter in Babylon (1 Pt 5:13).

DATE

As the books of Matthew and Luke, Mark was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The book was possibly written somewhere between A.D. 65 and 70, during the years of political tension before the fall of national Israel.

THEME

Mark concentrated on the person and work of Jesus as God's Son who came into the world for the redemption of man (1:1). In order to focus on this theme, Mark concentrated on writing a brief narrative of some of the principal works of Jesus. Since the book was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the consummation of national Israel, as a Jew, we must assume that it was the purpose of the Holy Spirit through Mark to give a final statement that the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament could find their fulfillment in the ministry and person of Jesus.

PURPOSE

In writing primarily to Gentiles, Mark focused on the principal activities and teachings of Jesus. In doing such, he leads his readers into concluding that Jesus is the anointed Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus was the Son of God who was sent by God to redeem man. In 1:1 he wrote, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" By focusing on the authority of Jesus to manifest the supernatural power of the environment in which God dwells, the reaction of the disciples to the calming of the sea explains Mark's purpose for writing. "*So they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, 'What manner of man is this, that even*

the wind and the sea obey Him?'" (4:41). The answer to the disciples' wonder was the purpose for which Mark wrote. He affirmed that only God has the direct power to control the physical laws of nature. Since Jesus can control the natural world, then this Jesus is the one who created all things (Jn 1:1,2; Cl 1:16).

STYLE

As Matthew, Mark is not strictly chronological in recording the works and teachings of Jesus in reference to His ministry. He generally gives more detail in describing the various key activities in the life of Jesus than either Matthew, Luke or John. Mark goes into detail with specific events in order to leave a clear and vivid impression on the reader's mind concerning the nature and circumstances of the mighty works of Jesus (See 2:7; 4:39-41; 5:31-34; 6:51; 7:37; 9:2-7; 10:32; 11:18; 16:8). At the same time, Mark leaves out many events in the ministry of Jesus that both Matthew and Luke include. This is especially true of the material in the last part of the book that begins with chapter 12. Mark does this in order to maintain a fast moving narrative of Jesus' ministry. The words "straightway" and "immediately" are key words that explain the swift nature of the narrative. Mark is a book to read in order to discover an overall scope of Jesus' mission to the cross.

CHAPTER 1

Preparation

(1:1-13)

Outline: (1) Jesus' ministry begins (1:1-11), (2) Temptation of Jesus (1:12,13)

JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS

(Mt 3:1-12; Lk 3:1-20; Jn 1:6,19-28)

1:1 *Beginning:* Keep in mind that Mark will give a dramatic and fast moving narrative of the life of Jesus. This introductory statement is a summary of his purpose for writing. This is followed by the events of the entire first year of Jesus' ministry being recorded in this first chapter of the document. Therefore, no attention is given by Mark to the birth of Jesus in order to move the reader immediately into the important events of the

ministry. ***Gospel:*** This is the good news of Jesus' coming in order to die on the cross for the sins of all men (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). It is also His resurrection in order to give us hope of a bodily resurrection when He comes again (Jn 5:28,29; 1 Co 15:20-22). See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4. ***Son of God:*** See Mt 14:33; Jn 5:18; 20:30,31.

1:2,3 *I send My messenger:* Malachi and Isaiah were the prophets who prophesied the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (See Is 40:3; Ml 3:1; Mt 3:1-3). John came to prepare the hearts and minds of people in order that they accept the kingdom reign of King Jesus. Jesus was the Messiah for whom Israel had hoped since the

prophecies of the Old Testament were made concerning His coming. Mark wanted his readers to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and thus spare themselves from the imminent calamity that was about to come upon national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel in A.D. 70.

1:4 *Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:* It was the baptism (*baptizo*) of repentance in that it was to prepare the people of Israel to accept the One coming after John (Mt 3:11,12; 21:32). John called those who were sons of Abraham by faith out of national Israel. He did so in order that they be of a receptive mind to accept Jesus as the Messiah. John's baptism was for (*eis*) remission of sins (Lk 3:3) as was the baptism in the name of Jesus (At 2:38). However, John's baptism was only valid until the death and resurrection of Jesus to the right hand of God. After Acts 2, therefore, all baptism was in the name of Jesus and for remission of sins (See At 19:1-6).

1:5,6 *There went out to him:* John worked no miracles. Nevertheless, the power of his preaching that was backed with the commitment of his life, drew people to hear what he had to say (Mt 3:5). The godly and sacrificial lives of powerful teachers will move men to turn to God. John's message was to a people who had been misled by a legalistic religion referred to as the "Jew's religion" (or, Judaism) (See comments 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). It was a religion that was consumed with institutional ceremonialism, pompous leadership and traditions. To a great extent, therefore, it was a religion

that was void of spirituality. Therefore, the people went out to John because he offered them a disciplined faith that was based on the word of God and not the religious traditions of men. He offered them spiritual simplicity in a world of rules and regulations that had been bound on the minds of conscientious people who wanted to serve God (See comments Cl 2:20-23). ***Clothed with camel's hair:*** See comments Mt 3:4; Jn 1:27. John did not come in the presentable clothes of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. His clothes manifested the dedication of his life and focus on his inward man.

1:7,8 See comments Mt 3:11. John confessed his weaknesses of humanity in reference to the incarnate Deity about whom He prophesied. He expressed the unworthiness of all men in reference to any meritorious acceptance by God apart from grace..

1:9-11 See comments Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21,22; Jn 1:29-34 (See Ps 2:7; Is 42:1). Mark's record of the early life of Jesus is brief. It was not his purpose to focus on either the birth or early ministry of Jesus. He wanted to direct our minds specifically to the purpose for which Jesus came, that He was the redeemer of mankind. ***You are My beloved Son:*** Though Matthew records this as a general address to all who were present at the baptism, Mark was more specific. The voice from the Father was directed specifically to the Son. Matthew reports the words as heard from the standpoint of John, whereas Mark records the words as they were heard by Jesus.

TEMPTATION OF JESUS

(Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13)

1:12,13 Spirit drove Him: He was under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. **Into the wilderness:** See comments Mt 4:1-11. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness in order to spiritually prepare for the three years of ministry with the disciples. He was there alone in fasting and prayer. **Angels ministered:** After the forty days of fasting and prayer, angels ministered to the physical needs of Jesus in order to physically revive Him. It is probable that Jesus fasted for this period in the quiet solitude of a cave in the wilderness. We are not told why the fast was for forty days, other than the fact that Israel was forty years in the wilderness, and it would be forty years between the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There was possibly a day of fasting for every year.

Mission To Galilee

(1:14 – 4:25)

Outline: (1) Theme Of Jesus' message (1:14,15), (2) Call of Peter, Andrew, James and John (1:16-20), (3) Healing of a demoniac (1:21-28), (4) Healing Peter's mother-in-law (1:29-31), (5) Jesus confirms His destiny (1:32-34), (6) Retreat into the desert (1:35-39), (7) Healing a leper (1:40-45), (8) Healing a paralytic (2:1-12), (9) Call of Matthew (2:13-17), (10) Teaching on fasting (2:18-22), (11) Controversy over the Sabbath (2:23-28), (12) Sabbath controversies (3:1-6), (13) Healing the multitudes (3:7-12), (14) Calling the twelve (3:13-19), (15) Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (3:20-30), (16) Jesus' mother and brothers (3:31-35), (17) Beside the Sea of Gali-

lee (4:1,2), (18) Parable of the sower (4:3-20), (19) The lamp (4:21-25)

THEME OF JESUS' MESSAGE

(Mt 4:12-17; Lk 4:14,15; Jn 4:1-3).

1:14,15 See comments Mt 4:17. The time is fulfilled: The time was fulfilled to redeem those who lived under the curse of the law (See comments Gl 4:4,5). This was the time of the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning God's work to bring the Redeemer into the world (Dn 9:24-27; Lk 24:44). This was the time for the establishment of the new covenant (Jr 31:31-34). It was the end of national Israel, for Israel had accomplished her purpose. The purpose for the existence of national Israel was to preserve the seedline of woman in order to bring the Seed of woman, the Christ, into the world for the redemption of all men (Gn 3:15; Gl 3:16). **Kingdom of God:** This is one of Mark's key phrases in reference to the kingdom reign of God. It emphasizes the sovereignty of God that originates out of heaven. Matthew uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven," whereas Mark emphasizes the original source of the kingdom reign. He thus uses the phrase "kingdom of God." Throughout His ministry, Jesus used both phrases interchangeably in reference to the sovereignty of God that originates out of heaven. **Repent and believe the gospel:** Israel was to turn to the message that Jesus preached. All men were to prepare their hearts for His ascension to the throne of God (See Mt 3:2). Jesus' call was that people turn to Him in order to believe that He was the Christ and Son of God. Unless one so repents

he will not respond to the death of Jesus on the cross, nor will he believe the good news of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4; see At 20:21; Hb 6:1). When studying through these messages of repentance by Jesus and the early disciples, we must always keep in mind the coming destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70. The Jews' repentance not only meant that they would be delivered from their condemnation in sin, but also from the national calamity that was about to befall Israel. Since Jesus was the Messiah, then the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the consummation of Israel was at hand. The Jews, therefore, must turn to Jesus as the Messiah, and thus turn away from that which was coming to an end. Their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, therefore, in many cases meant the saving of their own lives as they stayed away from Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when over one million Jews were killed in the destruction of Jerusalem.

CALL OF PETER, ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN

(Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11)

1:16-20 Jesus' call of these disciples to apostleship came after He had already started His ministry. They had heard Him teaching in the synagogues. They followed Him immediately on this occasion because they knew what He was preaching. These men were sons of Abraham by faith, and thus responded to the message of Jesus. They represented the thousands of Israelites who were waiting for the Messiah. When Jesus came as the

Messiah, many readily accepted Him as such because of the announcements of John the Baptist (See comments Mt 4:18-22). Their ready acceptance of Him manifested their expectation of the Messiah.

HEALING OF A DEMONIAC

(Lk 4:31-37)

1:21,22 *He entered the synagogue and taught:* See comments Mt 4:23,24. For the Jews, the synagogue was a place on the Sabbath for reading and teaching the Sinai law. Jesus went to the synagogue because this was where religious people assembled for discussing matters of law. *He taught them as one having authority:* Jesus spoke in the sense that gave the impression that what He said originated from Him (Mt 7:28,29). As the Son of God on earth, He came to deliver God's word to man with authority (Jn 12:48). He did not speak by depending on the traditional interpretations of the Jewish fathers (See comments 7:1-9). Neither was it His concern to quote from others in order to add authority to His statements.

1:23 *Unclean spirit:* See comments Mt 4:24. The work of this spirit in the life of this man separated him from God (See Mt 12:43). That which was separated from God was considered unclean, for under Sinai law, when God classified something as unclean, it was to be separated. When one was considered unclean, he was separated from everyone else in the community. *He cried out:* Demons did not make those whom they possessed incoherent. This demon could speak

through the individual in whom he dwelt. In his speaking, he recognized and confessed the deity of the One who was in his presence. Demon possession was not manifested in one who had some type of hysterical fit. There is a difference between the demon possession of the 1st century and the uncontrolled hysterical fits that people allow themselves to go into in the modern-day context of assemblies that do not manifest the sobriety of Christian demeanor.

1:24 *The Holy One of God:* Unlike most people, this demon confessed who Jesus was. He, as well as all demons, knew who Jesus was (See Ps 16:10; At 2:27; Js 2:19). He also knew his destiny. That destiny was destruction (3:27; Mt 8:29; 25:41). We must keep in mind that Jesus created all those who were called demons at the time of His ministry, for He created all things (Cl 1:16).

1:25,26 Jesus had complete control over the being and activity of demons. Such was also the case with the disciples after Acts 2 (See At 16:16-18). ***Torn him:*** The unclean spirit exercised one last torment of the body of the one in whom he indwelt before yielding to the authority and command of Jesus (See Lk 1:12).

1:27 *What new teaching:* Jesus' work of casting out demons moved the people to consider His teaching. It was the purpose of exorcism, or the casting out of demons, therefore, to move people to consider the teaching of the one who had the authority to cast out demons. If one could exercise such authority over the world of spirits, then certainly he was to be heard. This was the reason why

God allowed demons to possess people in the 1st century. They became the occasion by which Jesus and His disciples were proved to have authority over the power of Satan. And thus, they were to be heard as His messengers to all men. For this reason, God did not allow others to cast out demons who were not preaching the message of Jesus and the disciples. The purpose for which God allowed demons to possess people contradicts the belief that people other than Jesus and His disciples were able to cast them out. If one does not teach the truth of the gospel, then certainly God would never allow such a one to cast out demons.

1:28 *His fame spread:* See Mt 4:24; 9:31. No one before had cast out demons in Israel. Specifically, no one had attempted to cast them out with the authority by which Jesus cast them out (See comments At 8:4-13; 19:11-20). The manifestation that demons were completely subject to the command of Jesus caused great amazement in the minds of the people. At this time in the ministry of Jesus, therefore, people throughout all the region of Galilee were talking about Him.

HEALING PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(Mt 8:14,15; Lk 4:38,39)

1:29-31 *House of Simon:* See comments Mt 8:14,15. Peter, Andrew, James and John knew one another well before being called by Jesus to be apostles. They were all fishermen, and possibly grew up together as children. ***Simon's wife's***

mother: Peter was married, and in his call to be an apostle, Jesus did not call him to leave his wife. All of the other apostles, except Paul, were either married or became married (1 Co 9:5). This incident possibly happened about one year after Jesus started His ministry and His call of Peter to apostleship. In this case, Peter was still maintaining his relationship with his family. He, as all leaders among God's people, were not called into celibacy in order to lead the people of God. **She ministered to them:** The response to God's grace of healing is service to others (See comments 2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19). Being a disciple of Jesus is defined as one's response to the grace of God.

JESUS CONFIRMS HIS DESTINY

(Mt 8:16,17; Lk 4:40,41)

1:32-34 See comments Mt 8:16,17.

Various diseases: Jesus healed all manner of sickness. His healing did not depend on the severity of the disease. There was nothing beyond the ability of His power. Since He had created all things of the physical world (Cl 1:16), then certainly He had power over all He had created. **Did not allow the demons to speak:** The demons would confess Jesus to be the Holy One of God when they were confronted by Jesus (vs 24). This proclamation, regardless of where it originated, infuriated the scribes and Pharisees because they considered it blasphemy. Therefore, at this time in His ministry it was too early for Jesus to begin His confrontation with the religious leaders in order to take Himself to the

cross (Jn 10:17,18). Jesus thus had the power to keep even the demons from speaking through those in whom they dwelt.

RETREAT INTO THE DESERT

(Lk 4:42-44)

1:35-37 A solitary place: The Greek word used here (*eramon*) refers to a desert place. Jesus went to a place where there were no people. Throughout His ministry He often went to places where He could be alone in order to concentrate on prayer to the Father (6:46; 14:32ff; Jn 17; Lk 5:16). **Followed after Him:** And so should all men. Early in the morning before the disciples had awakened, Jesus left them and went into the desert place. At this time in the ministry of Jesus, multitudes were seeking Him, though not purely for the reason of receiving teaching. They wanted to hear what He had to say, but they also sought Him for healing.

1:38,39 Let us go into the next towns: It was not the ministry of Jesus to remain with one group of people for any length of time. His ministry gave an example for the work of an evangelist, that is, to go about proclaiming the good news to all (See comments Lk 4:42-44). **Throughout all Galilee:** It was the work of Jesus to preach everywhere (2:17; Mt 4:23-25), not to stay in one location and have people come to Him as did John the Baptist. Evangelists must preach and teach throughout regions to the lost in order to give as many as possible an opportunity to hear.

HEALING A LEPER

(Mt 8:2-4; Lk 5:12-16)

1:40-45 See comments Mt 8:2-4. This leper expressed complete faith in Jesus that He was able to heal him. The sight and condition of the leper moved Jesus to have compassion on him, and thus, heal him (Lk 7:13). His healing was immediate, not delayed over a period of time (Mt 15:28). Such is the nature of a true miracle of God. Miracles are instantaneous because the power of the supernatural is unleashed on the physical world. ***Sternly warned him:*** In this region Jesus needed to do much teaching before the people started to come to Him

for healing. For this reason, He instructed the healed man not to talk to others about his healing. Man's desire to concentrate on the flesh almost always supersedes his desire to have his soul healed. In this case, as well as others, Jesus wanted the people to first understand what He was teaching before they came to Him for healing. In this way, He would be known first for what He believed and taught, and then, He would be known for having the power to heal. Therefore, Jesus sought to draw people first by His teaching before they were drawn because of their physical needs.

CHAPTER 2

HEALING A PARALYTIC

(Mt 9:1-8; Lk 5:16-26)

2:1-12 See comments Mt 9:1-8. ***He preached the word to them:*** Jesus has now returned to Galilee from the east side of the Sea of Galilee. He came to Capernaum. Great multitudes came to Him. The occasion here is thus one for teaching the people. Wherever there are people assembled who want to listen, it is a time for teaching. ***A paralytic:*** The four friends of this man were determined to have their friend healed. Jesus saw their faith in His ability to heal the man. The man was healed because of their faith, not the faith of the man who was healed. The faith of the man's friends moved them to take him to the One who could heal him. Faith in cases of healing is defined here as the motivation to trust in the One who could heal. It was not a condition for the actual healing to take

place. ***Who can forgive sins but God alone:*** They were right. Only God can forgive sins, for sin is against God. They thus had to make the deduction that the One in their presence who healed the paralytic was God. In this situation, however, they assumed that Jesus was only a man. As a man, therefore, they complained that He was being presumptuous to suppose that He could forgive sins. ***We have never seen anything like this:*** God had not allowed miraculous works to happen in the generation of Israel to which Jesus came. Only when Jesus came did God unleash the realm of the supernatural into the physical world in order to confirm that Jesus was sent from God (See comments Jn 3:2; Hb 2:3,4). The fact that Jesus worked miracles among them was evidence that no one else did. Therefore, when we read in the New Testament the claims of false teach-

ers that they worked miracles, we can be assured that no miracle was being worked (See comments At 8:8-13; 19:18,19; 2 Th 2:9).

CALL OF MATTHEW

(Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32)

2:13-17 See comments Mt 9:9-13. Matthew's call to apostleship came after Matthew had heard the teachings of Jesus. Immediately after his decision to follow Jesus, he took up the work of Jesus, that is, he invited those of his social acquaintance to come and hear Jesus. Those the scribes and Pharisees considered to be sinners, and those with whom one was not to associate (tax collectors), were invited by Matthew into his house for a small group environment of teaching. **Those who are sick:** Jesus used the occasion of the accusation to reaffirm His ministry to those who were of a receptive heart. Unfortunately, the "sick" on this occasion were not the tax collectors and sinners in Jesus' presence. The spiritually sick were the ones who made the accusation, that is, the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus' ministry was to those who would hear. Those who were secure in their traditional religiosity did not want to hear, and thus, they were not the focus of Jesus' ministry. Jesus focused primarily on those who were the sons of Abraham by faith.

TEACHING ON FASTING

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

2:18-22 See comments Mt 6:16-18; 9:14-17. As the bridegroom, Jesus was still with the disciples. Therefore, it was

not the time for fasting. However, after Jesus left the presence of the disciples, it would then be the time when they would fast. At the time of the ascension of Jesus, He left the disciples (At 1:9). It was at that time, therefore, when the disciples began their fasting. The disciples of Jesus continue fasting even to this day as they wait for His final coming. Much of Jesus' ministry was teaching from house to house. **New wineskins:** Jesus would not allow the Pharisees to intimidate His disciples into submission to their traditions concerning fasting. Their old wineskins of ceremonial religion were in the process of passing away. Things were in the process of change. The new wineskins of Jesus' teachings were at hand. The new teachings of Jesus would not fit into the wineskins of the Pharisees. Therefore, it was a time for new wineskins. They must change from the old to the new. Jesus brought a paradigm shift of the society of Israel, and thus it was time for drastic change. Those who could not change from the traditional religion of the Jews, would be caught up in the calamity that was soon to befall national Israel.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE SABBATH

(Mt 12:1-8; Lk 6:1-5)

2:23-28 See comments Mt 12:1-8. **Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath:** Their accusation was based on the disciples' simple efforts to harvest some grain for eating. Such was unlawful according to the religious leaders' additions of tradition to the original

Sabbath instructions of the Sinai law (See Ex 20:10; 31:15). However, what the disciples did was not unlawful according to the intent of the original law of the Sabbath. The religious leaders had bound their additional laws to the Sabbath law to the point of considering their additions the law of God. It was these additions to the Sabbath law that Jesus and the disciples broke, not the original Sabbath law. The disciples were thus considered liberal in that they did not submit to those traditions that were bound on the people by the scribes and Pharisees. ***Have you never read what David did:*** David ate the showbread, which according to the law, was designated only for the priests

(Lv 24:5-9; see 1 Sm 21). The Pharisees did not believe that David sinned, though he did that which was contrary to the Sinai law. But here they were inconsistent. They excused David while they condemned Jesus and the disciples. Such is the thinking of religious people who cannot see the difference between their additions to the law of God and the actual law of God (See comments 7:1-9; Mt 15:1-9; 23:23,24 and comments in intro. to GI). The scribes and Pharisees were so concerned about their defense of institutional Judaism that they failed to see the inconsistencies in their legalistic theology.

CHAPTER 3

SABBATH CONTROVERSIES

(Mt 12:9-14; Lk 6:6-11)

3:1-6 See comments Mt 12:9-14. ***They carefully watched Him:*** See Lk 14:1; 20:20. The religious leaders who maintained a legal system of Judaism had set themselves up as watchdogs of their system of religion in order that everyone conform to their opinions and traditions. They did so in order to discover those who would not conform to the institutional identity marks of their system of religion. Thus on this occasion, the Pharisees sought an occasion to bring accusation against Jesus for violating the laws of Judaism. ***With anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts:*** The hardness with which the Pharisees judged others caused anger in Jesus (Zc 7:12). Their rejection of Him and His message was caused by their religious

prejudice. Therefore, it grieved Jesus to see such in the minds and hearts of men. Those who have created a religion after their own desires become hardened against truth (See comments 7:1-9). Once one has deceived himself into believing that his self-made religion is truth, he will not accept anything that would contradict his "truth" (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

HEALING THE MULTITUDES

(Mt 12:15-21)

3:7-12 See comments Mt 12:15-21. After His confrontations with the Pharisees, Jesus withdrew from the multitudes who were yearning to be healed. They realized that Jesus had the power to heal (Mt 9:21; 14:36). Demons caused those in whom they dwelt to fall down before Jesus and confess that He was the Son of God (Mt 8:29; 14:33). However, Jesus

would not allow the demons to make Him known at this time in His ministry because it was not yet time for a direct confrontation with the religious leaders concerning His sonship. Consider also that Jesus did not want one who was considered possessed in the community giving testimony to His deity. The demons' proclamation at this time would surely have added power to the Pharisees' blasphemous accusations that Jesus was from Beelzebul.

CALLING THE TWELVE

(Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:12-16)

3:13-15 *He went up into a mountain:* We are not sure as to what mountain this was. The mountain was a location where Jesus could have a private meeting with the twelve concerning the special work to which they were going to be called (Lk 9:1). This was Jesus' retreat with those He was training to be leaders. *They should be with Him:* The twelve were to be with Jesus during His earthly ministry in order that they might learn from Him. Their discipleship could be accomplished only by watching His behavior. Being a disciple of Jesus is more than knowledge of the word of God. It includes the implementation of the word in the life of the disciple (1 Co 11:1; Ph 4:9). *He might send them out to preach:* They were sent out during the ministry of Jesus (Lk 10). They were also sent out after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 (See 16:15; Mt 28:19,20). Preachers are sent out to preach the gospel. If one would allow himself to follow this example, then he

must allow himself to be sent out to preach. The twelve were given authority by Jesus to unleash the power of the supernatural in order to heal and cast out demons (See comments Mt 4:24). They were given the authority to do this in preparation for their mission that would come after the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God.

3:16-19 See Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:14-16; At 1:13. The twelve Christ-sent apostles were Peter (Cephas or Simon), James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus (Simon, the Zealot), Simon, and Judas Iscariot. Being a Christ-sent apostle meant that they were personally called by Jesus, and commissioned to preach the word of God. No one could be a Christ-sent apostle unless he had been personally called by Jesus (See comments At 1:21:22).

BLASPHEMY

AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Mt 12:22-37)

3:20-30 The last half of verse 19 should begin this section because they went into a house where the multitudes came to them. See comments Mt 12:22-37. *Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit:* Blasphemy is assigning the work of God through His people to be from Satan. God is thus mocked by those who believe that the work is of Satan and not of God. This is what the scribes did in relation to the slanderous works of Jesus. They said that Jesus was of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (vs 22). But it was the Holy Spirit who was

working through Jesus in order to empower Him to reveal the power of the supernatural in the physical world. Therefore, if one accused that Jesus' miraculous power was the work of the Devil, then such was blasphemy. It was not blasphemy just against Jesus, but against the Holy Spirit who was actually doing the miraculous work through Jesus.

JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS

(Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21)

3:31-35 See comments Mt 12:46-50. Obedience to the will of God constitutes sonship to God and brotherhood with Jesus (See Gl 3:26,27). Spiritual relationships, therefore, are more important than physical relationships because spiritual relationships will carry on after the conclusion of this world. Therefore, Jesus said, "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*" (Mt 10:37).

CHAPTER 4

BESIDE THE SEA OF GALILEE

(Mt 13:1-3; Lk 8:1-3)

4:1,2 See comments Mt 13:1-3. The presence of the multitudes here again offers the opportunity for Jesus to do what He continually did throughout His ministry. He taught the people. He continually taught in several environments in order to lay the foundation upon which evangelists, after the establishment of the church, would later find receptivity. The more people He encountered during His personal ministry, the more people there would be who would remember their personal contact with Him on earth. It would be these Jews who would eventually go into all the world and preach the gospel. On this particular occasion, Jesus taught in parables in order to reveal truth to those who were truth seekers. He taught in parables also for the purpose of concealing truth from those who were blinded by their religions that were based on traditions (Compare 2 Th 2:10-12).

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(Mt 13:3-23; Lk 8:4-15)

4:3-20 See comments Mt 13:3-23. In this parable Jesus emphasized the receptivity of the hearts of men. One's priorities in reference to that which is in his environment often affects the manner by which he receives the word of God. Those who are truth seekers, are productive because they are motivated by the word of God's grace (2 Co 4:15). Jesus was at this time sowing the seed of the kingdom. Men were judging themselves by how they responded to the seed (See Jn 3:17). One judges himself for either eternal life or condemnation depending on how he reacts to Jesus.

THE LAMP

(Lk 8:16-18)

4:21-23 Inherent in the purpose of a lamp is that it produces light. It is therefore placed in a position to accomplish its purpose. Lamps exist for the very

purpose of bringing light to men (See Mt 5:15,16). The function of light is to reveal that which is present in the house. ***There is nothing hidden that will not be manifested:*** In reference to the preceding parable of the sower, the preaching of the gospel will bring to light the true nature of the hearts of everyone who hears it. It is the light that both enlightens and brings to light (See comments Jn 3:17,18; 5:34; 6:40; 12:48). Those who hear will be revealed to have open hearts. Those who reject the word of God will be revealed to have hardened hearts.

4:24,25 *Take heed what you hear:* They must understand and respond to what they hear. They must be as the good soil (vs 8) that brought forth abundantly. ***It will be measured to you:*** Those who are of a humble nature are receptive to the teachings of Jesus. They hear with the intention of producing. As a result of their willingness to hear, they will grow. To the ones who grow, therefore, more will be given in the sense that the righteous will receive far more in eternal glory than they expect (Rm 8:18). ***Who does not have:*** Those who are not of the nature of the good soil will not produce. They will thus not receive the bounty of more. That which unrighteous hearts possess will be lost in the final reckoning of all things. Their good works will be in vain because they are not in Christ (See comments 1 Co 15:58). The unrighteous will lose whatever they had. Truth seeking students of God's word will thus receive more out of Bible study than those who only casually read it. They will receive more out of life because

of the righteous nature of their hearts (Jn 10:10). Christianity is more than having a knowledge of the Bible. The abundant life of Christianity comes from a thankful heart that responds to the love and grace of God (2 Co 4:15; 1 Jn 4:19). Through such appreciation one enacts the fruit of the Spirit in his life (Gl 5:22,23). Those who behave what they believe will spiritually grow. If one does not manifest the light of the gospel in his life through good works, then he will spiritually die (Mt 5:16). The only guarantee to life, therefore, is to work out one's salvation with fear and trembling (Ep 2:10; Ph 2:11,12).

Mission To Decapolis

(4:26 – 5:43)

Outline: (1) Parable of the scattered seed (4:26-29), (2) Parable of the mustard seed (4:30-34), (3) The tempest at sea (4:35-41), (4) Healing a Gadarene demoniac (5:1-20), (5) Plea of Jairus for his daughter (5:21-24), (6) Healing a woman with an issue of blood (5:25-34), (7) Resurrection of Jairus' daughter (5:35-43)

PARABLE OF THE SCATTERED SEED

4:26-29 In this parable Jesus explained that He was harvesting the fruit of the field of Israel that had been planted centuries before through the establishment of the nation of Israel. Through the medium of His messengers, God had planted the seed of His eternal plan with Abraham, through whom all nations would be blessed by the Blessing that would come from his seed (Gn 12:1-3). By preserving Abraham's seed in the na-

tion of Israel, God brought forth the plan of redemption through the Seed, Jesus Christ (Gl 3:16). As a nation, Israel grew and brought forth fruit. Regardless of the sleeping and rising of the messengers of the kingdom, the fruits of the word of God continued to produce sons of Abraham by faith. Jesus' point is that men have no control over the germination and growth that is produced by the seed of the kingdom (See 1 Co 3:6,7,12-15). **The seed should sprout and grow:** Growth and production of fruit is inherent within the nature of the seed of the kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom reign of God continued to permeate the hearts of those who were children of Abraham by faith, and thus, the seed produced growth and fruit. **Harvest has come:** Jesus had now come for the harvest (See comments Mt 21:33-44; compare Rv 14:15). It was now time for the fruit to be given to Jesus in order that the kingdom reign of God continue under His control as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). The harvest, therefore, was the consummation of the nation of Israel. All that God had done throughout history with the nation had come to a finality in Jesus (See comments Gl 3). Jesus' mission, therefore, was to harvest the sons of Abraham by faith, and then terminate national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He thus came in judgment on Jerusalem forty years after His ascension in order to finalize national Israel.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

(Mt 13:31,32)

4:30-32 See comments Mt 13:31,32. **To what will we liken the kingdom of God:** There is no metaphorical parable that will completely explain the nature of that which is beyond the physical experiences of man. The definitions of our words confine us to our experiential world. In other words, we form the definitions of our words by our relationships with people, events and things of this world. Therefore, we have no words that will fully explain to our satisfaction that which is beyond this world. That which is beyond this world cannot be defined with words of this world. Since the kingdom of God is not a kingdom of this world (Jn 18:36-38), then we will not be able to understand every aspect of the kingdom. In this context, therefore, Jesus sought to explain the nature of the kingdom reign of God. At the same time, we must understand that we are limited in our thinking to things and events of this world. Jesus could only use metaphorical stories that were called parables in order to take our minds beyond that which is of this world. For this reason, therefore, every biblical interpreter must be careful not to literalize the message of the parables in the sense that would lead one to believe that the parables explain every aspect of the kingdom of God. The parables were given to take our minds beyond the simple events of the parables. The parables were given in order to lift our minds to wonder about that which must be beyond the limitations of our minds and beyond the limitations of our dictionary to define. It was for this reason that Jesus taught in many

parables. If the kingdom of heaven were of this world, then there would have been no need to teach with metaphorical stories. Since the kingdom was never to be of this world, Jesus had to take our minds beyond the things of this world through parables. **Like a grain of mustard seed:** In the realm of spiritual growth, the kingdom reign of God permeates the hearts of men (See comments Lk 17:20,21). When the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then spiritual growth occurs within the hearts of men. The message that initiates the growth may appear small, but the results are tremendous. Through us, God *“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”* (Ep 3:20; see Rm 16:25; 1 Co 2:9; Cl 1:29). When men allow the seed of the kingdom (the word of God) to direct their lives, then the body of His people grows. The kingdom reign of the Son that was to be announced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, would give rise to the beginning of the body of Christ. It would be on that day that hearts on earth would first respond to Jesus as the King of kings. The ekklesia (church) of Christ would thus be the manifestation of the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven (See comments Mt 16:18,19).

4:33,34 See comments Mt 13:34,35. **Able to hear it:** Those who have searching hearts will hear the message of the parables. Because of their desire for and love of truth, they will not reject the message that is being communicated through the parables (See At 17:11; compare com-

ments 2 Th 2:10-12). The truth that is given through the means of metaphorical language is understood only by those who have open minds and hearts. Those who have closed minds and hearts with hidden agendas will twist the message of God that has been given in metaphorical language (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12; 2 Pt 3:15,16). Understanding the kingdom of God as it is explained in the parables, therefore, becomes a test to determine if one has an open mind. If one comes to the parables with an established theology, he will not be able to objectively discover the message of the parables. It was for this reason that the scribes and Pharisees failed to understand the kingdom of God that was revealed through the parables.

THE TEMPEST AT SEA

(Mt 8:18,23-27; Lk 8:22-25)

4:35-41 See comments Mt 8:18,23-27. **Let us cross over to the other side:** We would correctly assume here that Jesus knew what was about to happen. Therefore, He was setting the stage for a miracle that would manifest His control of the physical world (See comments Hb 1:1-3). **And there was a great calm:** In the presence of Jesus there should also be a great emotional calm in our lives (See Ps 65:7; 89:9; Lk 4:39). **Why are you so fearful:** Matthew also recorded that Jesus made this statement before the work of the miracle. This is the point that Jesus wanted the disciples to understand. At this time, all things were under the care and control of Jesus because He was head over all things (Jn 13:3; 17:2).

After the ascension, God “*put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church*” (Ep 1:22). Jesus is now head (in control) over all things for the sake of the church. We must understand that the phrase “all things” includes all that is of the physical world and all things that are of the world of rational beings. Both the celestial and terrestrial worlds are now under the control of Jesus (Hb 1:1-3; 1 Pt 3:22).

The calming of the tempest at sea was a miracle that was worked in order to prove to the disciples that Jesus has everything under control. ***What manner of man is this:*** Once one recognizes that Jesus is God and the Creator of all that exists (Cl 1:16), then he will realize that nothing is outside the power of Jesus to control. For this reason, it is faith in Jesus that brings peace of mind (Ph 4:7).

CHAPTER 5

HEALING

A GADARENE DEMONIAK

(Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-39)

5:1-20 See comments Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-39. More details concerning what happened in this incident are given by Luke. Since this miracle of healing manifests Jesus' power over the world of demons, Luke goes into more detail for the purpose of accomplishing his theme of recording a defense for Christianity. Gadara was the main city of the area after which the region was named. The fact that this event that took place in Gadara is very significant in the sense that the demoniac was well known for being a terror to the community. However, when he was healed, he was one of the greatest witnesses to the power of Jesus over all forces of Satan (See Lk 8:39). Jesus asked him to go tell others what God had done for him. When our lives are changed by allowing God to work in our hearts, we become a testimony to others of what Christianity is to humanity. We become a witness to how Jesus can change our lives. The lesson is that when

one becomes a true disciple of Jesus, there is great change in his life.

PLEA OF JAIRUS FOR HIS DAUGHTER

(Mt 9:18,19; Lk 8:40-42)

5:21-24 See comments Mt 9:18,19. ***At the point of death:*** Matthew records that the daughter was dead (Mt 9:18). Luke states that Jairus said she was dying (Lk 8:42). The fact was that the daughter was dying at the time the father left to find Jesus. She died while he was gone (vs 35). Jesus' authority to unleash the power of the supernatural from which He came manifests here His power over the living and the dead. Death cannot exist in the presence of the supernatural, for God is eternal. This miracle, therefore, manifests the supernatural realm from which Jesus came and the realm in which all Christians will dwell in the presence of God.

HEALING A WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD

(Mt 9:20-22; Lk 8:43-48)

5:25-34 See comments Mt 9:20-22. *Suffered many things by many physicians:* The doctors had prescribed many supposed cures for this woman. None worked. She had thus spent all that she had in the twelve years of the sickness in order to be cured. However, when she heard of Jesus, she reasoned that if she could only touch His clothes she would be healed. And so it was. Her faith drove her to reach for Jesus. Her faith was not the condition for her healing. It was the motivation that drove her to Jesus. This miracle, as well as all miracles where faith was involved, was not a psychosomatic recovery. Jesus did not demand faith as a condition for healing. Their faith was to be in Him concerning who He was. Psychosomatic recovery is the power of one's mental attitude to induce a limited recovery from physical infirmity by mentally blocking pain. But we must not confuse such psychosomatic responses with miracles as that which took place in this context. If we do, then we will limit the miracles of the Bible to the power of the mind of man over his physical condition. True miracles have nothing to do with the mind of men in the sense that one must be in a right state of mind before the miracle can happen. When the power of the supernatural is unleashed into the world of nature, miracles occur regardless of the thinking of men. God's power is greater than the mental abilities of men. His power is not governed by the minds of men. When God wanted to reveal His supernatural power, such power was not con-

trolled by the minds of men.

RESURRECTION OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

(Mt 9:23-26; Lk 8:49-56)

5:35-43 See comments Mt 9:23-26. *Only believe:* This statement was made to the father, not to the one on whom the miracle was to be worked. Belief was not the condition for the work of the miracle. Jesus simply asked the father to trust in Him that He was able to do that which would bring him comfort. *Talitha, cumi:* Mark is the only writer who records these Aramaic words that Jesus spoke to the girl at the resurrection. *Immediately:* A true miracle is immediate and complete. *Great astonishment:* See 1:27; 7:37. A true confirming miracle will produce amazement in the minds of people because it is openly perceived by the senses of men. The amazement is the result of people experiencing something that has happened out of the ordinary occurrence of natural law. Therefore, in order for a confirming miracle to be considered a real miracle, it must produce amazement in the minds of the beholders. And in order for the miracle to produce amazement, the miracle must be perceived through one or more of the five senses of men.

Mission To Galilee

(6:1-29)

Outline: (1) Last visit to Nazareth (6:1-6a), (2) The ministry of Jesus (6:6b), (3) Sending the twelve (6:7-13), (4) Herod and John (6:14-29)

CHAPTER 6

LAST VISIT TO NAZARETH

(Mt 13:54-58)

6:1-6a See comments Mt 13:54-58. *A prophet is not without honor except in his own country:* The teaching and mighty works that Jesus did were too much for those who knew Him from childhood. They were not prepared to accept Him for who He actually was. To them He was only a local carpenter's son (Greek, "builder") who grew up in Nazareth. He was the "local boy" the village or town fathers could not accept to be the Messiah at this time in His ministry (Jn 4:44). *He could do no mighty work there:* He could not because the people were not driven by faith to go to Him. Since they considered Him only a local personality, they did not accept Him as one who had authority over the supernatural (See Gn 19:22; 32:25). This event explains the faith that one had to have in order to be healed. The faith was in the one through whom God worked to heal. In this case, it was faith in Jesus to heal. Because those of Jesus' home country would not accept Him, He did not have the opportunity to heal many people, for few believed in Him. A common dilemma of leaders is being accepted by those of their home country.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

6:6b See comments Mt 9:35-38. *He went around the villages, teaching:* This one statement explains the ministry of Jesus, and thus gives an example to teachers who would function in following the

example of Jesus' ministry. In the early part of His ministry, He wanted to do much teaching. He wanted emphasis placed on teaching in order to prepare people for His kingdom reign that was to come. For this reason, He asked those who were touched by healing not to speak concerning their healing, lest people be drawn to Him simply for the purpose of being healed (5:43). His going about in a circuit to teach is certainly a good example for evangelists today who want to teach a great number of people in a specific region (See comments Lk 4:42-44). Great movements of Christianity are started by a great amount of teaching. When much teaching is done, the teaching by word of mouth reaches many in the society who are receptive to the word of God.

SENDING THE TWELVE

(Mt 10:1-15; Lk 9:1-6)

6:7-11 See comments Mt 10:1-15. This was one of many preaching trips that Jesus commissioned the twelve to do. They were given power to heal as well as to cast out unclean spirits. The purpose of the trips was to accomplish the mission of teaching as many people as possible before the event of the cross and resurrection in Jerusalem. The teaching prepared the minds of the people to accept Jesus' kingship that would later be proclaimed by the disciples on and after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The preaching trips also prepared the disciples to face rejection by those to whom they went. Jesus had commissioned them

to preach what would be “new wine.” They were going to people of “old wine-skins.” The preaching trips gave them an opportunity to face the rejection of a misguided religious world into which they would go after Acts 2. While Jesus was still with them, they could return for His counsel concerning problems they encountered on their preaching tours.

6:12,13 See comments Mt 11:1.

HEROD AND JOHN

(Mt 14:1-12; Lk 9:7-9)

6:14-29 See comments Mt 14:1-12.

At this time in Jesus' ministry, people were trying to determine who He was. Because of the miracles, they knew that He was more than a good teacher of Israel (Jn 3:2). They had at this time speculated that He might be the resurrected Elijah, or the Prophet who was to come in Israel as the Deliverer. They possibly believed that He would be like one of the other Old Testament prophets. Herod's conscience may have been bothering him because he had killed John. He thought Jesus might be John the Baptist raised from the dead (Lk 3:19). **These powers are at work in him:** Herod at least concluded one thing that was right. If John had been raised from the dead, then the power of the supernatural was at work in the resurrected John. The supernatural was at work, but it was not at work through a resurrected John. It was at work through the One about whom John prophesied and the One in whom all the world must believe. **Herod feared John:** Herod feared that if he acted against John, then something dreadful would happen

to him. To some extent, therefore, Herod accepted John as a just and holy man of God. It seems that his acceptance of John was greater than the self-righteous religious leaders of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Herod's pride to maintain face among his peers moved him to overcome his fear and carry out a rash promise he had made in response to the lustful dance of Herodias' daughter. John's physical death thus manifested Herod's spiritual death because he loved his position of this world more than God.

Retreat To The Desert

(6:30-52)

Outline: (1) Report of the twelve (6:30-32), (2) Feeding of the five thousand (6:33-46), (3) The storm at sea (6:47-52)

REPORT OF THE TWELVE

6:30-32 We do not know the time that transpired between the sending of the twelve in verse 12 and their reporting back to Jesus. They here reported to Him what they had taught the people and also the miraculous deeds that were done by their hands. It is important to notice here that the twelve had been given authority to command the miraculous power of God before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them in Acts 2. The Spirit was here working through them in the same manner He would work through them after Acts 2. This preaching trip of the twelve, therefore, was a training exercise for the apostles. When the time came to preach in the near future, they would know what to do. **Come away by yourselves into a deserted place and rest a**

while: Mark lists at least eleven instances when Jesus went to a place of rest. This is a good example for any evangelist who has given himself to periods of intensive evangelistic efforts. Because these worthy evangelists worked hard, they needed the rest. They needed time to talk among themselves and with God about the great things God had done through them. This was a retreat for prayer, thanksgiving and discussion.

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

(Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15)

6:33-44 See comments Mt 14:13-21.

Were like sheep not having a shepherd:

The people saw that Jesus entered a boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus arrived at the other side, the multitudes had already arrived there on foot. Therefore, when He saw their determination to follow Him, He was moved with compassion. They were a nation of people who had not been spiritually led for years, and thus, they sought for someone to give them guidance. They flocked to the godliness of John. Now they were coming to Jesus. They were looking for spiritual leadership. This was the leadership that the religious leaders of the day were not giving. It was in the context of their searching for someone to lead them that Jesus worked this miracle of creation. The five loaves of bread and two fish fed about five thousand men plus the women. Twelve baskets full of fragments were left over. This multitude of seekers came looking for one who would lead them. They found the Chief Shepherd

and the Son of God who would lead them to victory through the cross. The proof of the miracle was magnified in the baskets of leftovers they took up. The power of the One who was in their midst was measured by the leftovers. He was truly the Son of God who had the power of creation (Jn 1:1,2; Cl 1:16).

6:45,46 See comments Mt 14:22,23. Jesus here set the stage for the miracle to prove His power over the physical laws of nature. He sent the disciples on by themselves by boat on the sea, knowing that a storm would develop that would engulf them.

THE STORM AT SEA

(Mt 14:24-33; Jn 6:16-21)

6:47-52 See comments Mt 14:24-33.

The disciples were rowing against the wind in the late evening. They did not think that their lives were in danger. They were simply struggling against the wind. In the early morning from 3:00^{am} to 6:00^{am} (the fourth watch), Jesus was walking by them on the Sea of Galilee. ***Would have passed by them:*** Jesus was passing by them not in the sense of leaving them in their predicament, but in order to present the opportunity that would truly manifest His deity. But Jesus may have been exercising a sense of humor. They were struggling against the wind and He with ease was simply walking by on the water. There would come a time, however, when they would have the faith to move mountains. ***It is I:*** This could be translated, "I am" (See Ex 3:14; Jn 8:24,28,58). Their superstitious nature led them to think that they were seeing a

ghost. But Jesus reassured them that it was He. ***They had not understood about the loaves:*** Mark adds this statement here to associate these two miraculous wonders of Jesus. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on water proved that Jesus was Deity (See Jn 1:1-3). He had the power to create (Cl 1:16). He also had the power to control that which He had created (Hb 1:3). It was at this time in the ministry of Jesus that the disciples were beginning to realize who He was. ***Their heart was hardened:*** At the time of the feeding of the five thousand, they were slow to understand who He was (3:5; 16:14). They had not understood from the miracle that He was God. Therefore, the statement that their hearts were hardened must be understood in the context of what Jesus wanted them to understand concerning who He really was. They had accepted Him as a good teacher who could work miracles as Elijah or one of the prophets. But Jesus was more than a prophet. He was the Son of God who had the power of creation (See comments Mt 16:18-19). Jesus wanted them to realize that He was the Son of God.

Mission To Galilee

(6:53 – 7:23)

Outline: (1) Healing in Genesaret (6:53-56), (2) Condemnation of traditional religion (7:1-23)

HEALING IN GENESARET

(Mt 14:34-36)

6:53-56 See comments Mt 14:34-36. At this time in Jesus' ministry many of the people were coming primarily for

healing. Though the works of healing provided an opportunity for teaching, it seems that the masses were more concerned over their physical problems than their spiritual problems. And so it is in a world where men have allowed the physical and temporal to distract them from the spiritual that will extend far beyond the destruction of this physical environment. ***As many as touched Him were made whole:*** In verse 56 it is stated that they first begged Jesus that He might heal them. However, it seems that the number of those who were seeking healing was so great that Jesus simply allowed them to touch Him in order to be healed. It would certainly have been an amazing experience just to have been there. It would have been exciting to see the reaction of the multitudes to the presence of the Son of God among so many who sought healing. On this occasion, Jesus at least manifested a small glimpse of what heaven will be. The redeemed will be in the presence of God, and thus, there can be no sickness there. They will be in an environment of continual well-being (Rv 21:4). The redeemed will be in an environment where the power of the supernatural will not allow sickness and pain to exist. It is difficult for us to understand such an environment in this world of pain and suffering. However, since God is above this physical world, then we must conclude that He will provide an environment of perfect well-being that is above and beyond this present world. This is the hope of the Christian. It is in this environment we continually long to dwell.

CHAPTER 7

CONDEMNATION OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION

(Mt 15:1-20)

This section of teaching that was prompted by the scribes and Pharisees, is one of the most helpful sections of Scripture in aiding our understanding of the nature of the teaching of Jesus in comparison to the religion of Judaism into which He came. This also helps us to identify the nature of institutional religions throughout the world that have been fabricated after the traditions of men. More important, from what Jesus said here we can better understand the character of those who promote such religions. It is in this context that Jesus defines the contrast between the behavior and beliefs of the true sons of God and those who have created a religion from their own traditions. By using this occasion to teach concerning the nature of the Jews' religion (Gl 1:13,14), Jesus explains the nature and development of legalistic traditional religion. He explains that human religious traditions will marginalize the word of God in one's thinking to the point that people will be more interested in their traditional religion than the commandments of God. Students of God's word would do well to understand Jesus' statements here concerning the institutional religion of the Jews that led them away from the word of God, and thus away from God. This is a common problem with institutional religions throughout the world today. Men often maintain their traditions to the

exclusion of the commandments of God. In such religions, adherents are intimidated by their fellow man to conform to the traditions of the institutions rather than the commandments of God.

7:1-5 The scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem. They did not come to learn from Jesus, but to find fault with Jesus' teaching in reference to their established religious traditions. Those who are ignorant of the word of God come to find fault with the religious behavior of those they oppose. Their validation as religious leaders is confirmed only when they can find fault in the religion of other people. Leaders of traditional religions, therefore, do not call people's attention to what the word of God states, but to what their traditions dictate. The validation of their faith is based on their traditions, not on the word of God. They thus set themselves up as the watchdogs of their religion. ***They saw some of His disciples:*** They seek here to find fault with the teacher by pointing out the disciples' violations of their traditional religion. ***Unwashed hands:*** The religious leaders ceremonially washed their hands in preparation for eating. The washing of hands before eating was a good practice. However, these religious leaders had taken that which was a good practice of cleanliness and made it a religious law. By doing such, they bound the practice on the consciences of men. They were thus binding where God had not bound. When men feel obligated to keep a religious tradition, then the religious tradi-

tion has become bound on their consciences. It has thus become a religious law. The more the traditions are bound on our minds, the further away from God we move, for the one who binds religious traditions is creating a religion after his own desires. **Tradition of the elders:** All men have traditions in their religious behavior, for we are beings of tradition. However, to say that the traditional way of doing something is the only way it can be done is to add to the commandments of God. The tradition then becomes binding, and thus wrong. **Many other things that they have received:** Mark wants us to understand that the teaching of Jesus in this context is not specifically about the disciples' failure to wash their hands after coming from the market place. He wants us to understand that Jesus was attacking a legalistic system of religious thought and behavior. He was attacking the legalistic religious institution of Judaism where the religious leaders bound burdens on the consciences of the people that neither the religious leaders nor the people could bear (See At 15:10; see comments in intro. to Gl and Gl 2:4; 5:1; Cl 2:20-23).

7:6-9 One must not miss the importance of the principle that Jesus here explained. He identified the nature of a religion when it is burdened with performances of traditions that focus on the outward appearance instead of the heart of man. **You hypocrites:** The system of religion that was established by the religious leaders of Israel lends itself to hypocrisy. It was a system of outward legal performance, and thus inward death.

One could do the actions of the religion, but fail to concentrate on the spiritual development of his own heart. God knew that Israel would digress into this form of religiosity. He had prophesied through Isaiah what they would eventually do, for Israel in apostasy was doing the same at the time Isaiah made the prophecies (Is 29:13; see Is 5:24; 6:9,10; compare Jr 5:18-21,23,31; 6:19). We must also not miss the application to religions today that have been developed in the same manner as the Judaism of Jesus' day, and apostate Israel during the time of Isaiah. **This people honors Me with their lips:** Their religion was both traditional and outward. They were doing traditional religious practices according to the traditions of the fathers. Their outward performance with their lips manifested great religiosity, but their heart was not devoted to God. They went through the ceremonies of the religion without a dedicated and loving heart in reference to their relationship with God and man. When men are obsessed with traditions, they lose their obsession for God. **Their heart is far from me:** They gave the appearance of devotion to God through their religious ceremonies, but inwardly they were dead men's bones (See comments Mt 23). One can determine if his heart is close to God by his devotion to the word of God. One cannot have a heart close to God if he is not a student of the word of God. Those who do not listen to God through a study of His word can never come to a knowledge of who God is (See comments At 17:11; 2 Tm 2:15). **In vain they worship Me:** Their ceremonial worship of

God was useless because of their hypocritical character. They gave the outward pretense of worship, but inwardly their hearts were corrupt. They had created a religion after the traditions and doctrines of men that would allow them to feel conscientiously right before God while their hearts went unchecked. They then created in their minds a view of God wherein He supposedly behaved according to the beliefs of their religion. They had convinced themselves that God was pleased with their system of religion. Their first mistake was to begin teaching the religious traditions of men. In teaching the religious traditions of the fathers, they unconsciously began to make people feel that their religious traditions were important. But this respect for the traditions of the fathers led to something more than the simple teaching of the fathers. **Laying aside the commandment of God:** Their second mistake was to elevate the doctrines and traditions of men above the word of God. In this second stage of development into apostasy, one begins to ignore God's word in order to honor the traditions of the institution. One feels compelled to honor the traditions in order to keep peace with fellow adherents within the institution. Change from the traditions is threatened with excommunication from the institution. People are thus brought into conformity to the traditions in order to maintain a regimented system of religion that produces a superficial unity that is based on conformity to the traditions. **You reject the commandment of God:** The third stage of apostasy in institutional religion is that

one will openly reject God's word in order that the institution be preserved (Pv 1:25). The leaders of such religions vigorously defend the institution, for the existence of the institution validates their existence as leaders. If financial support of the leaders comes from the institution, then the vigor of the leaders to defend the institution is very strong. It is at this stage of digression from God that the apostate religion becomes resistant to the teachings of the Bible. Israel was at this state of apostasy when Isaiah wrote the statements that Jesus quoted in this context. Judaism was at this stage of apostasy when Jesus came. It was into this atmosphere of traditional religion that Jesus came with a message of grace, truth and freedom (Jn 1:17; Gl 4:4; 5:1,2). God allowed Israel to digress to this state of traditional religiosity in order to send forth His Son. It was the religious leaders of this system of religion that nailed Jesus to the cross. The same institutional religions today continue to nail Him to the cross because they reject His commandments as the Jews rejected them in the 1st century. Such systems of legalistic religiosity exist today throughout the world. It is into these systems of religion that the truth must go in order to bring freedom to those who are held captive by the religious institutions of men (See comments Gl 5:1). Such systems of traditional religion have produced various religious sects throughout the world. It is thus a time that the sons of Abraham by faith move closer together in Jesus through His word, laying aside the traditions of men in order to keep the com-

mandments of God.

7:10-13 Jesus used the law of God that taught children to take care of their parents to illustrate the extent to which the scribes and Pharisees had gone in their apostasy from the word of God (See comments Mt 15:1-9). The scribes and Pharisees required that the children's support, that would naturally go to the parents, should be given to the temple. The religious leaders would thus be the recipients of the contributions (See comments Lk 16:14). They had thus rejected the law of God in this matter and established their own tradition in reference to contributions. ***Making the word of God of no effect:*** The word of God, therefore, could not be applied to the lives of the people because the religious leaders led the people captive by their binding of religious traditions. The law that children take care of their parents was being violated by the religious leaders. They demanded that the parental support should be contributed to the temple. When a religious law that is invented by man takes the place of God's laws, or the rejection of God's laws, then the word of God cannot affect the hearts of people. The curse of legal systems of religion leads people away from God by moving people away from His word. In this way men start lording over the hearts and minds of others in order to maintain either their positions or financial support, or both.

7:14-16 From this general assembly in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees, the stage for the public confrontation between the religious leaders and

Jesus was set. It was set for the people in order that Jesus manifest to all the error of the traditional religion of the Jews. ***Called all the people:*** Before all, Jesus now explains the nature of the religion that was promoted by the religious leaders. He began by stating that what comes out of a man is that which shows what is in his heart. This helps us understand the problem with traditional religion. The focus of this system of religion is on the performance of the traditions or rituals, and not on the developing of that which is within the heart of man. The performance becomes more important than the heart, and thus, the Sunday morning performance is vain because it is not motivated by a heart that honors the word of God (See comments Mt 7:21-23). It also reveals the fallacy of religious people who seek to hide unholy hearts behind the veil of religious ceremonies that are performed during Sunday assemblies. The performance of religious ceremonies and rites cannot be a substitute for holiness in heart (See comments Mt 23).

7:17-23 ***His disciples asked Him:*** Jesus now directs the statements recorded in this chapter to the disciples. They found Jesus' public statements confusing, and thus, they asked Him in private concerning what He meant. ***That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man:*** Jesus is not talking about food. He is discussing the heart of men that leads to the behavior of their lives. If one's heart is unclean, then he will behave in a wicked manner (See comments Gl 5:19-21). A man is defiled when the

evil of his heart is carried out in the behavior of his life. One may perform religious ceremonies, but the performance of such ceremonies does not guarantee a righteous heart. In fact, the precision by which one seeks to perform his own self-acclaimed religious ceremonies may indicate the void of spirituality in his heart. He rigorously performs in order to change his heart. Too many people seek to generate a heartfelt religion by the performance of ceremonial assemblies. But if religiosity is maintained by outward man-made ceremonies, then something is wrong inside. Outward performances can take one only so far in spiritual growth. We must start in our growth where God starts. God starts with the heart. It is from the heart that spiritual behavior is directed toward unlimited heights (See comments 1 Jn 4:19).

Mission To Northern Palestine

(7:24 – 9:29)

Outline: (1) Healing a mother's daughter (7:24-30), (2) Healing a deaf and speechless man (7:31-35), (3) Feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10), (4) Attack of the Pharisees and Sadducees (8:11,12), (5) Warning of the Pharisees' leaven (8:13-26), (6) A test of faith (8:27-30), (7) Prophecy of Jesus' death (8:31 – 9:1), (8) The transfiguration (9:2-13), (9) Healing a demoniac boy (9:14-29)

HEALING

A MOTHER'S DAUGHTER

(Mt 15:21-28)

7:24-30 See comments Mt 15:21-28. Tyre and Sidon were cities of the Gentiles. One often wonders what was go-

ing through the disciples' minds as they journeyed to these areas where their traditional Jewish laws of association with Gentiles were put to the test. The purpose of the trip into these areas was certainly to prepare the disciples for a commission that would take them to every ethnic group of all the world (See comments 16:15; Mt 28:19; Jn 4:1-42). The gospel would go to the Jews first, but not only to the Jews. It would be for all the world (Compare comments At 10). **The woman was a Greek:** From their childhood, the disciples had been taught that Jews were not even to go into the house of a Gentile. Their cultural principle of separation from Gentiles had dictated their relationship with the Gentiles until Jesus came into their lives. It was now time to change. They were to bypass cultural barriers in order to carry out the proclamation of the gospel to all men. It was important to maintain the identity of national Israel until the coming of the Messiah. The cultural identity of Israel was to be maintained in order that the prophecies concerning the Blessing from Abraham be identified as fulfilled in Israel. But Israel was, at the time of the ministry of Jesus, in the process of being assimilated into the sons of Abraham by faith (See comments Gl 3:23-26). At this time, Jesus started introducing the disciples to the fact that national Israel was coming to an end, and thus they should start thinking of the mission before them to take the gospel to every ethnic group of the world (See comments Mt 28:19,20). **She kept asking Him:** And He kept ignoring her. On this occasion,

Jesus portrayed the disciples' cultural prejudice and separation from the Gentiles in order to manifest what was in their prejudicial hearts. The more He ignored her, the more they saw themselves in the actions of Jesus. He wanted His ignoring of the woman to motivate within them a response to do something. They must in the future be motivated by the spiritual needs of humanity to the point that they respond by preaching the gospel to every person (16:15,16). They must overlook their racial prejudices by coming out of their cultural cocoon in order to take the gospel to every ethnic group of the world (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

HEALING

A DEAF AND SPEECHLESS MAN

(Mt 15:29-31)

7:31-35 In avoiding the region that was governed by Herod Antipas, Jesus returned to the area of Galilee (Mt 15:29). ***Impediment in his speech:*** This man could not speak clearly because he was deaf. In private, Jesus signaled to the man by touching his ears and tongue because the man could not hear. ***Looking up to heaven:*** See 6:41; Ps 121:1,2; Jn 11:41. ***Ephphatha:*** This was an Aramaic expression that means "to be opened." Aramaic was possibly the language Jesus and

the disciples spoke as their common language. ***Immediately:*** There was no prolonged healing indicated here. A true miracle is defined by the instantaneous result of its effect. A miracle was defined by being openly perceived by others who could not deny it. This was the case with this miracle (At 4:14-16).

7:36,37 ***That they should tell no one:*** Jesus' purpose for making this request was to discourage people from coming to Him only for healing (See 5:43). Miracles were for the primary purpose of confirming God's messengers and message (16:17-20; Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; Hb 2:3,4). They were not simply humanitarian acts for the benefit of society. ***They were utterly astonished:*** See comments Mt 15:29-31 (See Is 35:5,6). The extent of their astonishment measured the undeniable evidence of the miracle (At 4:14-16). A true miracle is so definite and obvious that it affects one intellectually and emotionally. It was an occurrence that changed the lives of sincere people. True miracles cannot be questioned or denied. They are not as those counterfeit practices of false teachers who perform trickery in order to impress people, gain a multitude of followers, and especially, encourage people to give money (See comments At 8:4-13; 19:11-20).

CHAPTER 8

FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND

(Mt 15:32-38)

8:1-10 See comments Mt 15:32-38. There were multitudes in the region of

Galilee who were at this time following Jesus. They were committed to Jesus to the point of forgetting to bring food while following Him for three days. They would possibly have continued in their

fast if Jesus had not called the disciples together in order to use the situation to prove to them again that He had the power of creation, and thus, was God in their presence. **Leftover fragments:** As in the feeding of the five thousand, the leftovers manifested the purpose of the miracle (See 6:30-44). It was a miracle of creation. They ended up with more than they had in the beginning. Only God can create, and thus it was God who was in their presence. **Dalmanutha:** After the feeding of the four thousand, Matthew records that Jesus went to Magadan (Magdala) (Mt 15:39). Dalmanutha was either a village or small town within the region of Magdala.

ATTACK OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

(Mt 16:1-4)

8:11,12 See comments Mt 16:1-4 (Compare Mt 12:28ff; Lk 11:16,29; 12:54:56). These sects (the Pharisees and Sadducees) were not actually looking for a miraculous sign. They were looking for an occasion to accuse Jesus. Hundreds of miraculous signs had already been worked by the hand of Jesus. Jesus had even sent forth the disciples to work miraculous wonders throughout the region. Those who were truly sons of Abraham by faith believed the message that was confirmed by the signs. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, believed that the signs Jesus had worked indicated that He was from God (Jn 3:2). Therefore, we must not be led to believe that all the religious leaders of Israel had a jealous heart (See At 6:7). We must keep in mind that Jesus

had come to the Jews in order to implement a great change in their thinking and behavior. He was the cultural stimulus to initiate a social and religious paradigm shift from the old wineskins of the past to the new Way that was coming. He was about to ascend to the right hand of God, and thus be the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies concerning His kingship (Lk 24:44; see comments Dn 2 & 7). National Israel was coming to an end, and the spiritual Israel was about to be signed into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus. Jesus thus started the change that was coming, and the twelve disciples would continue the change with the Jews to the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70. Between the establishment of the kingdom reign of Jesus at His ascension in A.D. 30 and the end of national Israel in A.D. 70, God gave the early disciples forty years to reap out of national Israel all those who were sons of Abraham by faith. Once this was accomplished, and the fullness of the Gentiles had been grafted in (Rm 4; see Rm 9-11), then God swept national Israel from history. The kingdom reign of the Son was then manifested to all the world.

WARNING OF THE PHARISEES' LEAVEN

(Mt 16:5-12)

8:13-21 See comments Mt 16:5-12. The leaven of the Pharisees was their legal attitudes and teaching of religious regulations that they laid on the consciences of sincere believers to perform. The leaven of Herod was the evil of political intimidation to submit to what was

contrary to God's will. The influence of either the Pharisees or Herod would destroy the freedom of belief that Jesus was bringing to set the captives free from sin and misguided religiosity (See comments Jn 8:36; Gl 5:1). One should be cautious, therefore, not to allow his environment to determine or affect his beliefs concerning truth revealed from God. God's truth is not determined by either cultural or political events and situations. We must believe and obey God's will regardless of the environment in which we live (See comments At 4:19,20; 5:29).

8:22 Jesus now comes into the region of Bethsaida. This is probably Bethsaida Julius that was north of the Sea of Galilee. It was here that He encountered a blind man (Jn 9:1). He took this man outside the town to an area where there was no audience. Jesus did this in order not to cause excitement in the city that a healing of this nature would cause. He did not want people coming to Him simply for healing. Jesus sought to accomplish the healing, and at the same time be able to teach the multitudes in the town (See 5:43; 7:36). The healed blind man would later be a witness for Jesus in the region (See comments Lk 8:39).

8:23-26 There is no other incident in Jesus' miraculous works like the action of Jesus in this case. We are not certain as to why Jesus healed this man in two steps. Jesus may have wanted to prepare the way for the following teaching that He must be accepted to be someone more than a prophet. He must be accepted as the Christ and Son of God.

A TEST OF FAITH

(Mt 16:13-20; Lk 9:18-21)

8:27-30 See comments Mt 16:13-20. Mark omits, in the confession of Peter, that Jesus was the Son of God. The omission indicates that it was Mark's purpose in writing to concentrate on the messiahship of Jesus. If his readers were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, then they would conclude that He was the Son of God. The Holy Spirit knew that Jesus would inspire John to write the book of John, wherein John would prove His sonship (Jn 20:30,31). When one comes to Jesus, he must accept Him to be more than a good teacher. Jesus must be accepted to be more than a prophet or the Prophet about whom Moses prophesied (Dt 18:15-18). He must be accepted as the Son of God who now has authority over all things (Mt 28:18). If one does not accept Jesus as the Son of God, then there will be no motivation to submit to His will (See comments Jn 12:48).

PROPHECY OF JESUS' DEATH

(Mt 16:21-26; Lk 9:22-25)

8:31-33 See comments Mt 16:21-26. At this time in His ministry, Jesus turned His face toward the cross. He thus prepared the disciples for the cross and resurrection. He wanted them to know His intentions of directing the hostility of the religious leaders who would eventually nail Him to the cross. He was also preparing them to understand that He did not come to be a king on earth, which was the common belief among the Jews concerning the Messiah (See At 1:6). He was the Messiah (the Christ) and King

of Israel. However, He would be the suffering Messiah in fulfillment of prophecy (See Ps 22; Is 53). He would be the King of kings and Lord of lords who would reign at the right hand of God in heaven (1 Tm 6:15). And most important, He would be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).

8:34-38 *Deny himself and take up his cross:* Jesus had committed Himself to the cross. It was His destiny as the incarnate Son of God. In preparation for the cross, He asked the disciples to make the same commitment. And indeed, they would in order to accomplish the mission of preaching the gospel to the world. They also must be willing to risk death in order to carry out His great commission (At 15:25,26). At this time in His

ministry, Jesus was also separating the truly committed from those who were simply following Him without being totally committed to Him and the work (See comments Lk 14:25-35). For this reason, He called the people to Himself with the twelve disciples. It was at this time in His ministry, therefore, that everyone had to make a commitment to stay with Him. *Whoever is ashamed of Me:* The confession that Jesus demands is not a simple statement with our mouths that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God. It is a confession that we make with our whole life that is totally committed to Him (See comments Gl 2:20). Everyone who would seek to be a disciple of Jesus must commit himself to follow Jesus above all things of this world (See Mt 6:24; 10:32,33; Rm 1:16).

CHAPTER 9

9:1 This verse should be understood in the context of what Jesus said to the people and His disciples in the preceding verses 34-38. Some of Jesus' immediate disciples would be alive when the kingdom reign of Jesus would be manifested from heaven. After His resurrection, Jesus would ascend to the throne of David in heaven (Lk 1:31-33; see comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). He would be at the right hand of the Father and rule over all things (Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:8-11; 1 Pt 3:22). His kingdom reign, therefore, would be from heaven, not on this earth. It would be established in the days of some of the disciples who were in His presence at the time this statement was

made. In fact, it would be established in less than two years from the time Jesus made this prophecy (See comments At 2). It was a spiritual kingdom in the sense that men responded on earth in their hearts to the fact that He was Lord and Christ (See Mt 16:18,19; Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38; At 2:36,37). *Come with power:* The translation here could be "present with power." The manifestation of Jesus' reign in heaven was made known by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 (See Lk 24:49; At 1:8; 2:1-4). The presence of the kingdom reign in heaven would be manifested on earth by the obedience of men and women who submitted to His reign.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Mt 17:1-13; Lk 9:28-36)

9:2-13 See comments Mt 17:1-13.

The miracle of the transfiguration was meant to illustrate that change was coming. There would be a change from the law and the Prophets to the One to whom the law and the Prophets pointed (Lk 24:44). Jesus would be the One to whom all must go for salvation (At 4:12; Hb 1:1-3). The transfiguration of Jesus was also given to manifest that there would be a resurrection. The disciples understood this because after this event they questioned among themselves concerning the resurrection. This mountain-top event stimulated their thinking concerning Jesus' own discussions of His own resurrection (8:31), but also the general resurrection at the end of time (Jn 5:28,29). By the appearance of Elijah on the mountain, their thinking was focused on the prophecies of the coming of Elijah (Ml 4:5). But Elijah had already come in the sense that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk 1:17). The resurrection to come would not be the resurrection of the spirit and power of some person. It would be bodily in that the body of a person would be resurrected. A central teaching of Christianity is the fact that there will be a bodily resurrection of all saints at the end of time when Jesus comes again (See comments 1 Co 15; 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 4:13-17).

HEALING A DEMONIAK BOY

(Mt 17:14-20; L 9:37-43)

9:14-16 See comments Mt 17:14-20.

We do not know where Jesus was at the time the scribes disputed with the disciples. This passage simply states that on this occasion Jesus came to the disciples and found them disputing with some scribes. When Jesus did arrive, the multitude and scribes left the presence of the disciples and went running to Jesus.

9:17-29 *And they could not:*

Though the disciples had by this time cast out many demons (6:7), they could not cast out this evil spirit. *If You can do anything, have compassion on us:* Here is the plea of a concerned father for a child that was convulsed by a spirit. The father's statement here manifests a weak faith in the possibility that Jesus could do something to help his son. *All things are possible to him who believes:* The belief was not the condition for the healing. It was that which drives one to trust in Jesus (Jn 11:40). Jesus here affirms that our total trust must be placed in God. *Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief:* And so it is with thousands who have faith, but their faith will not move them to obedience (Lk 17:5). Unless faith becomes active, it is of no profit (See comments Js 2:14-26). Faith does not dispel all doubt. It is natural to have doubts, but our doubts must not hinder us from acting on our faith. We must walk by faith (2 Co 5:7). However, when we allow doubt to hinder our walk, then doubt is destructive. In this case, the father had enough faith to bring his son to Jesus. He realized, however, that his faith must grow beyond doubts that hindered him. Our doubts are reminders that our faith

must continue to grow. **By nothing but prayer:** Since the problem in the context is the weak faith of the disciples that hindered them from casting out the demon, then prayer and fasting should increase their faith. The disciples had to grow in faith in order to do the work to which Jesus was calling them. They realized this when they asked Jesus on one occasion to increase their faith (Lk 17:5). Therefore, if prayer and fasting were to increase the faith of the disciples, then it should increase the faith of those today who pray and fast. Christians who want to grow in faith must give themselves to prayer and fasting.

Mission To Galilee

(9:30-50)

Outline: (1) Jesus prophesies His death (9:30-32), (2) The greatest in the kingdom (9:33-37), (3) The disciples' sectarian attitude (9:38-50)

JESUS PROPHESES HIS DEATH

(Mt 17:22,23; Lk 9:43-45)

9:30-32 See comments Mt 17:22,23 (See Lk 9:43-45). **Did not want anyone to know about it.** It was time for Jesus to spend time with His closest disciples, those He had called to be His apostles. The reason for the private discussion was to prepare them for His death and resurrection (Lk 9:44). However, they did not understand what He was saying when He spoke of His death and resurrection. **Were afraid to ask Him:** They had been scolded for their faithlessness, and certainly did not want another rebuke. Nevertheless, they knew that Jesus expected them to understand what He was saying

(Lk 2:50; 18:34). And they would understand, but only after the event of His death and resurrection. Many things were spoken to the disciples during the ministry of Jesus that they did not understand. However, Jesus knew that the Holy Spirit would later reveal all things to them and cause them to remember what He had taught them. Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things (Jn 14:26; see Jn 16:13). **Afraid:** At this time in the ministry of Jesus, the disciples indeed had a healthy respect for Jesus. They did not consider Him to be one of their "buddies," but the Messiah and Son of God. He was their "friend," but not as we would consider one another as equals in our friendships with one another. Jesus is our friend, but He is also God whom we must fear, for He is coming with judgment on all those who reject Him and His word (Jn 12:48; 2 Th 1:6-9).

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

(Mt 18:1-6; Lk 9:46-48)

9:33-37 This seems to be the first recorded dispute the disciples had concerning their prideful ambitions with one another. At one time they evidently had ulterior motives when they asked Him who was the greatest in the kingdom (See comments Mt 18:1). On this occasion, and the occasion when James and John in 10:35-45 asked for special positions, the apostles at this stage of their spiritual growth manifested their ambitions for greatness and recognition. This ambition stayed with them to the time when

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (See comments Lk 22:24-30). They thus had some growing to do before they were given the responsibility of being witnesses for Jesus. One can be effective for Jesus only when he learns the spirit of being a servant. It is interesting to note that on each occasion when they had a dispute concerning this matter, Jesus had just talked about His death and departure. It seems that such talk generated carnal ambitions within the hearts of the disciples as to who would take the place of Jesus in their supposed earthly kingdom (See comments 10:35-45).

THE DISCIPLES' SECTARIAN ATTITUDE

(Mt 18:6-14; Lk 9:49,40)

9:38-41 *We forbade him because he did not follow us:* There seems to be some arrogance on the part of the disciples here against one they considered unauthorized to work miracles in the name of Jesus. This one may have been one of the disciples who was previously sent out by Jesus to cast out demons (See Lk 10:1-17). We are not told who this person was. He was simply doing this work in the name of Jesus. Whatever the case, the disciples were not happy with his work. Because he was not in what the disciples considered to be the inner circle of disciples, they thought that he should be discouraged from his work. They thus manifested their sectarian attitude, thinking that this disciple should be a member of their party before he could truly represent Jesus. ***For he who is not against us is on our side:*** Jesus

did not condemn the work of the disciple who was casting out demons in His name. It was the enemy of righteousness about whom the disciples must be concerned, not someone who was giving glory to Jesus by working in His name. Jesus wants the disciples not to discourage the good works of those who are not of their social group. It is interesting in this context to note that this exorcist was doing what the disciples could not do for lack of faith (See 9:18,19,29). Therefore, the effective work of the unknown disciple may have embarrassed the disciples concerning their weak faith. ***Whoever will give ... in My name:*** Christians must be eager to do good to all men (Gl 6:10). Even the smallest deed in the name of Jesus is recognized by God. Any good that one might do, therefore, must be encouraged. However, it is not on the basis of good works that one will be saved. In order for good works to be profitable, one must be in a covenant relationship with God (See comments 1 Co 15:58). ***Whoever:*** Jesus' teaching on this matter went beyond good works. His teaching focused on acceptance, not rejection. The disciples of Jesus must be known for their willingness to accept, not eagerness to find occasions for rejection. The disciples must learn how to receive those with whom they may disagree (See comments Rm 14).

9:42-50 See comments Mt 18:6-14. In the context of verses 42-50, some believe that Mark brings together several statements that were made by Jesus on different occasions. However, we must not assume that because Jesus made a

statement on one occasion during His ministry that He did not state the same truth in a similar manner on another occasion. We must keep in mind that He was teaching His disciples and preparing them for the work of world evangelism and church edification. In doing this work of teaching on different occasions, He certainly would reemphasize truths that needed to be impressed on their minds. **Enter into life maimed:** Jesus stresses how serious we must be about possibly causing “these little ones” to stumble. If disciples have an attitude of acceptance of others, they will be cautious about being an occasion for one to stumble. **Unquenchable fire:** Emphasis is not on the duration of the fire, but on the certainty that it will exist to punish those who offend. Jesus wants us to understand that the punishment for sin will not go away. There will be a definite punishment for the wicked. **The fire is not quenched:** Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:24 where Isaiah said that *their* fire is not quenched. It was the worm and the fire that consumed the dead bodies in the seemingly unending fire of the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. The metaphor of Isaiah’s “fire” was taken from the historical event of the burning of the carcasses of dead Assyrian soldiers after God killed 185,000 of them who sought to take Jerusalem. The bodies of the Assyrians were burned in the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. The event became the historical foundation for the metaphor that illustrated the final destruction of the enemies of God at the end of time (2 Th 1:6-9). The Greek word

gehenna also finds its meaning in the continuous fire that consumed the rubbish that was dumped in the garbage heap of the valley of Hinnom. Jesus used the word “gehenna” to emphasize the fact that offenders will face the punishment of the consuming worm and fire. His emphasis was on the fact that we cannot ignore the consuming fire. It will not go away. However, that which is cast into the consuming fire will eventually be destroyed (Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). Therefore, it is best to cut off that part of one’s character that offends others. It is best to cut it off lest one cause another to stumble. **Salted with fire:** Jesus possibly reverts back to correcting in their lives that which needs to be brought under control. It is the fire of persecution and trials that purifies our character (1 Pt 1:6,7). One’s work is also tried by the fires of life (1 Co 3:13). The fire, therefore, purifies the character of individuals in order to preserve them through life and prepare them for heavenly dwelling. **Have salt in yourselves:** The purified character of the disciples would increase their effectiveness and impact on society (Mt 5:13-16). As salt acts as a preservative, so their Christian influence in society would preserve society. If one’s life does not act as a spiritual preservative for society, then he has lost his Christian influence. He is of no value for kingdom business, and thus, not a proper candidate for eternal heaven.

Mission To Perea And Judea

(10:1-52)

Outline: (1) Teaching on divorce (10:1-12), (2)

Jesus and children (10:13-16), (3) The rich young ruler (10:17-31), (4) Preparation for the cross (10:32-34), (5) Ambitions of James and John (10:35-45), (6) Healing of two blind men (10:46-52)

CHAPTER 10

TEACHING ON DIVORCE

At this time in His ministry, Jesus went south to the region of Judea. In Mark's swift narrative of the ministry of Jesus, this was the only journey to Judea of the three possible journeys that Jesus made during His ministry to this area. Mark thus recorded the final journey. From this chapter onward, Jesus focused on the cross. He thus prepared His disciples for His final confrontation with the religious leaders and His subsequent victory of the cross.

10:1-12 See comments Mt 19:1-12. *Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her:* The passage says that the divorcing is the basis of committing the adultery against the wife. It is not the adultery that gives rise to the divorce but the divorce that causes the adultery against the man's wife. The word "adultery" is thus used in reference to one of its common meanings of breaking a covenant or contract. In this case, it is the breaking of the covenant of marriage. Therefore, the one who divorces his wife and marries another has broken the contract of marriage with his first wife. The wife is thus sinned against by the action of her husband. She becomes an adulterated one, that is, one with whom a marriage contract has been broken by the unfaithfulness of the husband to the marriage contract (See Mt 5:32; 19:9; Js 4:4).

JESUS AND CHILDREN

(Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17)

10:13-16 See comments Mt 19:13-15. It must be stated that this text makes no inference to the baptism of little children. There is no statement in Scripture that gives any indication that babies were baptized. Infant baptism is the tradition of men and an addition to the will of God. These children were simply brought to Jesus for blessing and prayer, a practice which was common in Israel. When the disciples hindered the little children from coming to Jesus, Mark records that Jesus was greatly displeased. He was greatly displeased because the children represented the nature of those who would accept His kingdom reign in their hearts. This incident is followed by the case of the rich young ruler and the request of James and John for positions of authority. Mark seems to be taking this opportunity to emphasize those incidents in the ministry of Jesus that dealt with one's pride, possessions and positions in reference to accepting Jesus as the One who must reign in our hearts.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

(Mt 19:16-30; Lk 18:18-30)

See comments Mt 19:16-30. Of the three records of this incident, Mark gives the most detail. He does so possibly because it illustrates the religious behavior of many Jews during the time of the min-

istry of Jesus. However, in the context of what has just happened in reference to the little children, and the incident concerning the ambitions of James and John, Mark's placing of the incident of the rich young ruler in this context is not incidental. The young man who addressed Jesus here was rich. However, we must also remember that he was a ruler with some position in society. The positions for which James and John sought in the following case of verses 35-45 is what this young ruler had but could not give up. Mark places this incident here, therefore, for the benefit of those who will not give up those positions and possessions in life that hinder them from becoming disciples of Jesus.

10:17,18 *Going out to the road:* Jesus and the disciples were leaving town and going to the road that went to Jerusalem (vss 1,32). ***What must I do:*** This rich young man came running to Jesus and knelt down before Him. With great sincerity, it seems that he approached Jesus for answers concerning a problem with the system of religion that he maintained. It was a system of legalistic religiosity that was taught by the scribes and Pharisees (See comments Mt 23 and intro. to Gl). His performance was good, but his question indicates that he knew that something was not right within his heart. ***There is none good but one:*** With "good" having reference to complete righteousness, then there is only One who is such, that is, God. The problem facing man, therefore, is how can sinful man approach an all-good God. Jesus answers, "*I am the way, the truth, and the*

life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn 14:6; see comments Rm 7:24,25).

10:19 The problem with the question and response of the young ruler was his emphasis on performance. He first asked what he could do. He responded with what he had done. However, he knew that his performance of law could not justify him before God because all men sin. His knowledge of this truth was manifested in the very fact that he was asking Jesus for an answer to his spiritual dilemma of not being able to keep law perfectly in order to save himself.

10:20,21 *I have observed:* The young ruler checked off all the right points of obedience. At least in reference to the commands Jesus stated, he said that he had observed the law. However, he was surely familiar with David's proclamation in Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3 that were quoted by Paul, "*There is none righteousness, no not one*" (Rm 3:10). There is none righteous because all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23). ***One thing you lack:*** When one believes he has met all the requirements for justification before the Good God by keeping law, there is always something lacking. And it is this lack that will bring condemnation (See comments Js 2:10). In this particular case, it was the materialism and position of the rich young ruler that stood between him and God. ***Sell whatever you have:*** The problem with the young ruler, therefore, was not with his outward manifestation of religiosity, but with his heart. In order to come into a right relationship with God, this par-

ticular rich person had to relieve himself of that which emotionally kept him from dependence on God. He was self-sufficient in his riches and self-confident in his performance of law from youth. He therefore felt that he did not need to trust in the grace of God. **Follow Me:** The second thing Jesus asked him to do was to follow Him. In order to do this he would have to give up whatever position he had as a ruler. For those who are in power, this is a difficult thing to do. In this case, it was too difficult for the young ruler.

10:22 *He was sad at this saying:* The rich young ruler realized that his problem was within his heart. He was not angry with Jesus for making the statement. He realized that his performance of the law from youth was not sufficient to establish a correct relationship with God. He had to deal with the problem of possessions and position that was a problem in his heart. He went away grieved in his spirit because at this time in his life he could not make the sacrifice to be a disciple.

10:23-26 The disciples were astonished at the teaching of Jesus concerning the rich young ruler. Their beliefs were based on the erroneous concept that riches were in some way evidence of God's favor, especially if such was combined with obedience to the law, as was the case with the young ruler. Whatever position he had as a ruler, the disciples evidently thought that such gave him an advantage in reference to salvation. If this young ruler could not be saved, then they reasoned that no one could. The

disciples were wrong in their assumptions because their thinking was based on a wrong premise. They believed that one's wealth was a sign that God was working in one's life. They were wrong. The conclusion that righteousness was based on perfect keeping of the law of God was also wrong. No man can justify himself before God by keeping law, for all sin (Gl 2:16).

10:27-31 Herein is the key concept of what the encounter with the rich young ruler brought to light. *With men it is impossible, but not with God. For with God all things are possible:* It is impossible for one to perform either law or good deeds in order to justify himself before God. Paul said that there is none righteous (Rm 3:10). There is no one who can keep law perfectly in order to save himself. It is thus necessary that man's impossibility to be holy be made possible by the grace of God. Though still misunderstanding what Jesus meant, Peter affirmed that the disciples had left everything in order to follow Jesus. This was correct, but this would not bring them the eternal life for which they sought. Eternal life would be the result of God's grace, not the performance of men, even though they had left all to follow Jesus.

PREPARATION FOR THE CROSS

(Mt 20:17-19; Lk 18:31-34)

10:32-34 See comments Mt 20:17-19. On the road to Jerusalem Jesus prepared the disciples for what was about to happen in all their lives. He talked here

about His death and resurrection. The occasion sparked an opportunity for James and John to reveal what was in their hearts. Since Jesus spoke of His departure from this world, James and John realized that leadership must be assumed. The future of the disciples still rested in their misunderstanding concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus. They were still thinking that the kingdom would be something of this world (See comments At 1:6). And because they were thinking of the reestablishment of national Israel, their understanding of leadership in the kingdom was twisted. Leadership among the disciples on earth would not be as the leadership of this world.

AMBITIONS OF JAMES AND JOHN

(Mt 20:20-28)

When we come to the events in this context, we do not know exactly how long it was since the disciples disputed among themselves on the road to Capernaum concerning who was the greatest (9:33). On that occasion, when Jesus confronted them about their struggles among themselves for greatness, they kept silent. They knew that struggling for greatness, positions and power was wrong. Nevertheless, Jesus instructed, *“If anyone desires to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all”* (9:35). In this context, Jesus had just talked with the disciples about His death and departure. Though the disciples did not understand what He was saying concerning His departure, they did sense that

something was up. When a leader is going to depart, the disciples suppose that someone must take his role of leadership in the group. Someone must assume his authority over the group. And in this context, James and John were not assuming that Jesus would depart, but that He would assume kingship of an earthly kingdom that was soon to be established. They thus sought to get ahead of the other disciples in securing positions and authority in the kingdom to come. Therefore, we must keep in mind that the disciples' understanding of the kingdom was that it would be of this world. James and John came to Jesus with this understanding and maintained such beliefs even unto the ascension of Jesus (At 1:6). They certainly accepted Jesus as the Messiah. However, their concept of what the Messiah was to do was misguided. They had been influenced by the Jewish school of thought that the Messiah would restore Israel to her former glory. It would be like it was in the days of Solomon and David. They would be an independent state, separate from any occupying forces. So in the context of James and John's request for positions and authority, they were thinking earthly, not heavenly. They were thinking positions, not submission.

10:35 Matthew informs us in his account of this event that it was the mother of James and John who came to ask for the sons (Mt 20:20). However, before we blame the mother for the request, keep in mind that it was James and John who were behind the skirt of their mother. Mark identifies the real source

of the request. He does not even mention the mother in the discussions here between Jesus and the two ambitious disciples. For this reason, Mark simply leaves the mother out of the situation when he writes his account of what happened. The fact that Mark does not mention the mother indicates that the source for the request was James and John. They had evidently asked their mother to approach Jesus concerning their desire for leadership positions and authority in the supposed restoration of national Israel. It is in their heart to secure positions in the leadership structure of the kingdom that was to be restored. We wonder why these two disciples would ask for this special favor of Jesus. The answer may be that both James and John grew up in the influential household of Zebedee. Zebedee was evidently known in the circles of the Jewish religious hierarchy in Jerusalem, for during the trials of Jesus, John recorded, "*That disciple [John himself] was known to the high priest and went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest*" (Jn 18:15). We assume in this passage that the author of the letter of John identifies himself to all who personally knew the situation. "That disciple" was John. Since the young John was known by the high priest at the time of Jesus' trials, he evidently had grown up in a family that was acquainted with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. Therefore, we could assume that both James and John grew up in an influential family, possibly enjoying the privileges that went along with famous families. It could easily be assumed that they had

been spoiled a little by growing up in such an environment. However, regardless of our assumptions, we do know that Jesus saw in these two something that is not perceived on the surface in the context. Jesus was able to look beyond the worldly ambitions of the moment and see the greatness of the men inside both James and John. He saw leadership ability. He saw sincerity. It seems that Jesus' approach to this misguided request for authority by James and John was handled in a way we should imitate. Though the desires and concepts of James and John were wrong, Jesus did not come down on them with force and retribution. He was patient. He was instructive. In looking for leaders, it is best to look beyond the first impressions one receives from youthful ambition. ***Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask:*** Here is the voice of a spoiled child asking a father to do for him whatever he wants. James and John here behave as we sometimes do, asking God to answer every prayer request we may have. However, the nature of the request does indicate that James and John possibly know that what they are asking is not right. At least, they had come to Jesus privately, and through their mother, fearing the retribution of Jesus and the other disciples who eventually found out anyway (vs 41).

10:36 *What do you want:* The natural response to someone who would ask of us anything they desired would be, "What do you want?" What James and John wanted manifested their misunderstanding of what was to be in reference to the kingdom. What was to be was a

spiritual kingdom that would be manifested on earth as a church of slaves, not as a power structure over which men could exercise authority (See comments Mt 28:18; Jn 13:1-20; 18:36-38). They did not know this at the time they made the request. However, they would eventually learn.

10:37 *Grant to us that we may sit:* James and John are typical of too many leaders today. The type of leadership they were seeking consisted of sitting in positions of authority. They wanted to sit on judgment seats and with authority to command others to do the work. They wanted positions, office and authority. They wanted to sit in the business meetings and make decisions for others to obey. They viewed leadership as a sitting position, not a serving position. What Jesus was about to convey to them would certainly startle their thinking. James and John are here seeking for positions. In their minds these were positions, or “offices” of authority with the power of command. In the supposed physical kingdom to come, they were asking to be leaders who had the authority to command others to obey their will. They wanted to sit on the right and left side of the king.

10:38 *You do not know what you ask:* Jesus responded to the carnal requests of James and John in verses 38-40. Keep in mind that Jesus responded to James and John with the spiritual kingdom in mind, while James and John are making requests with a physical kingdom in mind. Remember also that James and John knew what was involved in the lead-

ership of a physical kingdom. In order to free Israel of her oppressor (Rome), they knew that great struggle would be involved. Many men would have to die. So before we are too hard on James and John, we must keep in mind that they knew what they were asking from the viewpoint of a physical struggle to liberate Israel. This helps us understand the nature of these two ambitious young men. They were not men of weak spirits. These were men of tremendous leadership character and bravery. In fact, when they were identified as Jesus’ apostles, Jesus called them Boanerges, which means “sons of Thunder” (3:17). Jesus knew that they would have to be such in order to do what they must do in the struggles of the spiritual kingdom to come. Jesus knew that the same courageous and strong character that is necessary in the hearts of generals who lead men into carnal warfare was also necessary to lead His saints into battle against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ep 6:10-20). Therefore, notice what Jesus first asks them. ***Are you able to drink the cup that I drink:*** The word “cup” was a metaphor, signifying the portion that is dealt to one at a feast. As a guest at a feast, one was expected to drink what was given to him in his cup. That was his portion. What Jesus was asking James and John was if they could handle the portion or responsibility of leadership that would be handed to them. As Jesus had to go to the point of death, so would they. And James did just this, being the first apostle to die at the hand of the enemies of God

(At 12:1,2). ***Are you able to ... be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized:*** This is a context where *baptizo* would better be translated “overwhelmed.” Jesus asked if they could be “overwhelmed” with the suffering that He was about to endure. Jesus was overwhelmed with or immersed in the responsibility of leading men out of sin into life. The cross was a tremendous responsibility. It included pain and sacrifice. There was great suffering involved. There was death. Jesus asked James and John if they were willing to be overwhelmed with the tremendous responsibility that comes with the suffering of leadership.

10:39 *We can:* This response reveals the inner courage and strength of the two disciples. They knew what it would take to be prominent leaders in a physical kingdom. They knew the burden of leading men. We must not think that these two disciples were ignorant of what it would take to expel the Romans from Palestine. Here we see the desire to lead, though their understanding of how and what they would lead is incorrect. Nevertheless, we must admire the inner strength of these two zealous disciples. Jesus had made a good choice in these two fishermen of Galilee who were sons of Thunder. ***You will:*** Jesus does not seek to correct their misconceptions concerning the kingdom for He knew that they would need the same strength to lead in the spiritual battle that it would take to lead a physical kingdom. Jesus responded to their original request by saying, “Can you?” Without hesitation the two ambitious disciples answered, “We

can.” Now Jesus says, “You will.” They would drink the cup and be overwhelmed with the tremendous responsibilities of leadership in the kingdom to come. They would suffer and struggle to lead a spiritual war against the wiles of the Devil. The burden of leadership that faces generals and kings in the physical world would soon be cast upon the shoulders of these two and the other apostles. Though understanding that the kingdom would be physical, both James and John were willing to accept the tremendous burden of leadership that went with the work of leadership. We must admire them for accepting such a responsibility. Their willingness to accept the responsibility of leaders manifested their characters of steel in order to lead the people of God. Such revealed their desire to get on with the mission of Jesus.

10:40 *Is not Mine to give:* Jesus now explains something that is hard for them to understand. The positions for which they had asked were not given by the Son while on earth. They were given by the Father, for the Father was still king of the kingdom and head over all things during the ministry of Jesus on earth. There is an order to authority in the Godhead revealed here that we do not expect to understand (See 1 Co 11:3). This order places God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the original giver of all authority (See Mt 28:18). Jesus was given authority over all things, and thus the One who gave Him the authority over all things would be the same One who would give the disciples the right to reign on thrones through the preaching of the

revealed word of God. Any one manifestation of the Godhead comes from the whole. No manifestation of God works independently of the whole. Therefore, though Jesus had the authority to bestow upon them a kingdom (Lk 22:29), the original authority came from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason, Jesus said it was not His alone to give. ***It is for those for whom it is prepared:*** Luke recorded in a similar context that the apostles would “*sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Lk 22:30). “Thrones” is a metaphor for the position of a king. Therefore, these apostles would be given positions. However, the authority of the “thrones” would not rest with them, but as it did with the throne of David throughout the history of Israel. The authority of the throne of David was from God, not David. God reigned in Israel through the Davidic kings. The authority of the Davidic kings was in God, not in the kings themselves. Though Jesus’ response to James and John may seem confusing, it is not when we consider the time the Father had set forth for the establishment of the kingdom reign of Jesus. The positions (thrones) were reserved for the apostles. The positions were prepared for them, for it would be through them that all truth would be delivered to man (See comments Jn 16:13). However, the time of the appointment would be determined by the Father. The giving of the positions was by the Father. Jesus was simply saying to James and John that they were asking the wrong person at the wrong time. In conjunction with this,

they were asking for the wrong thing. There would be no lords and authorities in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus. Jesus said that the “thrones” were prepared for the “whom.” The “whom” was the apostles. When they sat on the thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel after Acts 2 through the revealed word of God (Lk 22:30), they would be different men than at this time when they disputed among themselves. For this reason, Jesus used the pronoun “whom” as if it had reference to different men. In reference to their character, they would be different men after Acts 2. They would be different men than the ones who were at this time standing before Jesus where they were still struggling in rivalry among themselves.

10:41 *Greatly displeased with James and John:* We do not know how much time passed between the time when James and John actually approached Jesus and the time when the rest of the disciples discovered that they had sought such positions. The other apostles were possibly displeased because they also coveted such positions themselves. They certainly were not displeased simply because James and John asked for the positions. They may have been displeased because James and John were ahead of them in securing such positions. Whatever the case, the other disciples were not simply displeased, they were greatly displeased. And this great displeasure resulted in another dispute among the disciples concerning greatness and position.

10:42 *Jesus called them to Himself:* Jesus knew that they were having

struggles among themselves concerning who was the greatest and the one who should assume authority after Jesus departed. He knew that the solution was for them to come close to Him in order that they be instructed again on this matter. This is the second time they struggled with the problem that is so common among men. And, it would not be their last (See Lk 22:24). **Lordship ... authority:** This was what defined the leadership of the world. Lordship exists because someone has or either claims to have authority over another. Lordship is defined by one exercising authority over another. Rulers are such because they have been given authority to make decisions. And because they have authority, their decisions must be obeyed. This was what James and John were asking from Jesus when they approached Him about the positions at the right and left hand of Jesus in His kingdom. They wanted lordship and authority over the disciples so others would have to obey them when they gave a command.

10:43 *But it will not be so among you:* This is the foundation upon which all teaching on leadership in the church must be based. This is the principle of interpretation by which we must understand every other passage in the New Testament that speaks of leadership among the disciples of Jesus. Jesus said that there would be no lords or authorities among His disciples as were among the leaders of the world. In this context, Jesus identified the nature of leadership of the world in verse 42. Authority is invested in the leaders of the world by

either their own self-appointed power to rule, as in a dictatorship, or the constitutional authority of the people, as in a democracy. Regardless of the source of authority, the rulers of the world hand down dictates to the subjects of the kingdom. The very definition of authority means that one has the right to give orders for others to obey. It is the responsibility of the people to submit to this authority in fear of retribution. Submissive citizenship, therefore, is often maintained by fear, not service. The key thought that Jesus wants us to remember about the world's system of leadership is, "*But it will not be so among you.*" In this one statement Jesus contrasts the leadership style of the world with that which would be among His disciples. The authoritative lordship leadership of the world would not be among His disciples. There would be no lords among the disciples. There would be no authorities. There is nothing difficult about understanding the prohibition concerning lordship and authority among the disciples of Jesus. If one would assume lordship in the church, or claim authority, he violates this clear mandate of Jesus. Leaders must remember that Jesus has all authority and that He is the only Lord and head. **Great among you:** Jesus says that the great ones will be your servant. There would be only one Lord in the kingdom to come (Ep 4:4-6). There is only one head (Ep 1:20-23). There is only One who has all authority (Mt 28:18). Everyone else will be servants. In the context here the word "servant" is from the Greek word *diakonos*. The early

Palestinian homes of Jesus' day had servants in the house to care for the needs of the family. The needs of the family were the responsibility of the servants (*diakonos*). So it would be in the kingdom. The needs of the people of the kingdom would be upon the shoulders of the servant leaders. As servants, therefore, the leaders would respond to the needs of the people with service (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). By their service, the leaders would then lead those who needed service. The served always follow those who serve their needs. This work of leadership was certainly different from what the disciples had conceived in their minds at this time in the ministry of Jesus. Instead of being over the people, they were to bear the burden of the needs of the people. Leaders in the community of God would not be authorities over the people. Jesus would retain all authority on earth through His word (Mt 28:18). Leaders among the disciples of Jesus should make sure that no person seeks to exercise authority over the flock of God by stealing the authority of Jesus (See comments 3 Jn).

10:44 Will be bondservant of all:

Jesus took the illustration of servanthood out of the house and into the fields of the culture in which He and the disciples lived. The Greek word here for "bondservant" is *doulos*. These were those who were born into slavery. Slaves had no rights of command. They certainly had no authority. They had no rights of choice to determine how, when or what to do. Slaves did not have the privilege of choice. They simply give themselves to

the service of others. Likewise, leaders, as slaves in the community of God, do not have the privilege of choice in their service to the needs of the people. There is no authority among slaves.

10:45 For even the Son of man:

Notice in the text the words "for even." Jesus had every right to demand service, or to forcefully lord over the flock. However, He commanded our submission by what He did for us in serving our sin problem. We thus follow Him in thanksgiving for what He did on the cross and continues to do as our Advocate (1 Jn 2:1). While on earth, He did not command the following of His disciples through authority. They followed because of His love for them. **Give His life a ransom for many:** Jesus came to serve, and by serving drew out of each of us submission and service to one another. Herein is the secret to leadership in the community of God. It is not by force or empowerment to a position, but by the example of servanthood. It is not by submission to authority, but by one's desire to be served by the leadership. It is by loving service on the part of those who would lead. Greatness in the kingdom comes through humbly serving the needs of others. It is the nature of God to meet the needs of man. Jesus came to give us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pt 2:21). Leaders in the community of believers lead by their example of godly living and service (See comments 1 Pt 5:1-4). Any who would lead among God's people must see themselves as Jesus in leading the disciples here on earth. As a leader, He gave His life as a

ransom for His sheep. Matthew's account of this context brings out the application of the word "ransom" in reference to all who would seek to be leaders. Jesus said, "... *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*" (Mt 20:28). To lead men to redemption, Jesus had to give Himself. He had to ransom Himself for the sake of buying us out of the slavery of sin. Jesus gave of Himself in order to satisfy our need to be delivered from that which we could not deliver ourselves. He thus did not come to serve Himself. He came to serve our sin problem. "Just as" He ransomed Himself for us, leaders must ransom themselves to service the needs of others. In a sense, therefore, we are not our own when we choose to be leaders. We belong to those we intend to lead to victory. We are the "slaves of all." In the context of Jesus' instructions here, the metaphorical sense of the word "ransom" is being emphasized. It is used in reference to leaders who must ransom their time, energies and skills for the church. There is giving of one's self in Christian leadership. Christian leaders first give themselves to the Lord. Secondly, they give themselves to serve the Lord's body. In a similar context at the end of Jesus' ministry, when the disciples competed among themselves (Lk 22:24), Jesus made an interesting statement. "*For who is greater, the one reclining at the table or the one serving? Is it not the one reclining at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves*" (Lk 22:27). Those who sit at the table are the guests.

They are the ones to whom special attention is being given. They are the important ones at the table. This is where we would expect Jesus to sit. However, He has taken the position of the servant of those who are at the table. He has taken this position in reference to our sin. He has and continues to serve in reference to our sin (1 Jn 2:2). It is also this position that all who would lead the people of God must take. Every Christian should take the position of a servant in order to present himself to his brother as a servant. This is the spirit of Christianity and the nature of the community of God. And it is this nature that must be characteristic with the leadership of the church. Learning submission is the key to learning leadership among God's people, for it is the spirit of submission that defines the nature of God's people.

HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN

(Mt 20:29-34; Lk 18:35-43)

10:46-52 See comments Mt 20:29-34. Matthew mentions that there were two blind men. In Mark's account of this healing, he mentions only the outspoken blind man of the two who approached Jesus. ***Jesus, Son of David:*** This was a common Jewish term that was used in reference to the Messiah. On His way to the cross, Jesus received this proclamation of who He was. He was the Prophet, the Seed of woman who was the fulfillment of all messianic prophecies (Gn 3:15; Lk 24:44). It is interesting to note that these blind men recognized who Jesus was, but the theologians of Jerusalem who claimed to know the Scriptures,

could not understand what they clearly saw. Though many warned this blind man to be quiet, he cried out even louder his belief that Jesus was the Son of David. He cried out his belief that Jesus was the Messiah. His outcry would be the work of all disciples after the events of Acts 2. The Christian community would go forth preaching that Jesus was the fulfillment of all prophecy (See Lk 24:44; At 8:4). Since Jesus fulfilled all prophecies concerning the Messiah, then He is the Messiah. Their plea would be that Israel accept Him as the Messiah.

Mission To Jerusalem

(11:1 – 13:37)

Outline: (1) The triumphal entry (11:1-11), (2) The barren fig tree (11:12-14), (3) Cleansing of the temple (11:15-18), (4) Have faith in God (11:19-26), (5) Challenge of Jesus' authority (11:27-33), (6) Parable of the wicked husbandmen (12:1-12), (7) Jesus tempted concerning taxes (12:13-17), (8) Questions concerning the resurrection (12:18-27), (9) The deceptive question of a scribe (12:28-34), (10) Jesus and David (12:35-37), (11) Rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees (12:38-40), (12) The widow's sacrifice (12:41-44), (13) The destruction of Jerusalem (13:1-37)

CHAPTER 11

Mark now takes us into the last few days of Jesus' ministry with the disciples. In doing so, it is not his purpose to be chronological. Therefore, the correct chronology of the events that he records must be determined by the chronology of Matthew, Luke and John. It is Mark's purpose to draw a climax to the final hours of Jesus' ministry.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

(Mt 21:1-17; Lk 19:29-44; Jn 12:12-19)

11:1-11 See comments Mt 21:1-17. The final entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was like that of a king riding triumphantly in his return home after a victorious battle. Those who knew the works and teachings of Jesus accompanied Him on this triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We must not assume that all these were those who only a few hours later would cry out for His crucifixion. In this multitude were His disciples and many others who had accepted Him as the Messiah. A few

hours from this event, however, the religious leaders would stir many in Jerusalem to have Jesus crucified. Those who were stirred up were possibly those who were visiting Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast, and knew little of Jesus. **Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the temple:** It is here that He for a second time drove out the money changers (vss 15-19; Mt 21:12). After this event, He went to Bethany to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus as a final retreat before entering Jerusalem (Jn 11:1,18; 21:1).

THE BARREN FIG TREE

(Mt 21:18,19)

11:12-14 See comments Mt 21:18,19. The incident of the fig tree was to offer a visual illustration for the disciples to have faith in God (See comments vss 20-24). Their faith would move them to trust in God who would work in their lives in order to confirm

them to be His messengers (16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Their faith must produce fruit in the years to come (Js 2:14-26). Fruit would be produced as the disciples went forth into all the world and preached the gospel.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

(Mt 21:12,13; Lk 19:45-48)

11:15-18 This is the second time Jesus cleansed the temple. John mentions that He had done the same about three years earlier at the beginning of His ministry (Jn 2:13-22). It seems that the money changers had picked up their tables from that cleansing and continued again with their greedy practices. The money changers and the merchants had created a religion based on their own materialistic desires (See comments Lk 16:14). With a clear conscience, these money changers worked in the temple area by giving unfair exchange rates to the foreign travelers who had come to honor the Passover/Pentecost feast. At inflated prices, the merchants were selling the animals that were needed for the sacrifices. What they were doing as a religious act was actually, in the words of Jesus, the work of thieves. When one creates a religion with impure motives, the religion that is created will justify the adherents to do deeds that are contrary to the word of God.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

11:19-24 See comments Mt 21:18,19. The fig tree that Jesus cursed the day before had now withered (vss 13,14). The purpose of the cursing must

be what Jesus stated in verse 24. **Believe that you receive them, and you will have them:** The disciples must put their total trust in God. If they do, then God can work exceedingly great things through them (Ep 3:20). They must therefore pray in faith “*without doubting. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*” (Js 1:6; see Mt 7:7). As Jesus enters into these final hours, the disciples’ faith would be tried. After all these things had come to pass, they would need to remember these statements in order to work by faith in God.

11:25,26 Forgive ... so that your Father may also forgive you: This is a condition for answered prayer. God does not answer the prayer that comes from an unforgiving heart. God will judge without mercy the one who has shown no mercy (See comments Mt 18:21-35; Js 2:13).

CHALLENGE OF JESUS’ AUTHORITY

(Mt 21:23-32; Lk 20:1-18)

11:27-33 See comments Mt 21:23-32. **Then they came to Him again ... the chief priests and the scribes and the elders:** At this time, it was the aggression of the religious leaders that developed the confrontation between themselves and Jesus. Jesus had violated their system of religious regulations. He did not conform to their system of institutional religiosity. He did not fit in with their idea of who the Messiah should be. Add to this the fact that He had gained the following of a great multitude of people. All these things conflicted with

the religious establishment and the pompous men who claimed leadership among the people. Their antagonism towards Jesus was growing. However, their hostility was controlled by Jesus who was

allowing Himself to be taken to the cross by means of their evil motives (See Jn 10:17,18). We must never assume that Jesus did not have all things under control in reference to His death.

CHAPTER 12

PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

(Mt 21:33-46; Lk 20:9-19)

12:1-12 See comments Mt 21:33-46. God planted the Israelite nation. He gave birth to them by bringing them out of Egyptian captivity. He sent His servants, the prophets, to restore them from apostasy. However, as the religious leaders became more entrenched in the traditions of the fathers (7:6-9), they seized the vineyard. They took over the people of God by submitting Israel to their lordship. They did this by binding on the people burdens that could not be borne (At 15:10). In other words, they stole the sheep of God. The intensity of their theft was revealed by their act of killing the Son of God. When leaders through intimidation, and presumed authority, bring God's people into the bondage of their control, they have stolen the sheep of God. ***They sought to lay hold on Him:*** The religious leaders clearly understood the meaning of the parable. The meaning was against them. They were in the very act of killing the Son of the One who owned the vineyard. Jesus knew that they would understand this parable because it was His desire to make them see who they really were in the eyes of God. Jesus was thus stirring the evil motives of their hearts in order that they carry out what

had been in their minds for some time, that is, the desire to do away with Him. We must keep in mind that these were religious leaders. Any religious leaders today who would so scheme against God's servants are the children of these evil leaders who were the sons of those who killed the prophets (Mt 23:31; Jn 8:44; see comments Mt 23). When leaders as these focus on power and their financial well-being, they will scheme against those who teach humble service for Jesus.

JESUS TEMPTED CONCERNING TAXES

(Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:20-26)

12:13-17 See comments Mt 22:15-22. In Mark's record of this incident, it is stated that the Pharisees and Herodians were responsible for the confrontation with Jesus concerning taxes. It was lawful, according to the Sinai law to pay taxes for the support of their leaders. Jesus' teaching here, therefore, is that it is not wrong to pay taxes to Caesar, though Israel was at this time an occupied land by the Romans.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

(Mt 22:23-33; Lk 20:27-40)

12:18-27 See comments Mt 22:23-

33. ***There is no resurrection:*** The Sadducees believed that one's punishment for sin was handed out by God in life, not after death. They believed this because they did not believe in the resurrection of the body (See At 23:8). ***In the resurrection ... whose wife will she be:*** Their question was meant to show a supposed contradiction in the teaching of Jesus. But they did not know the Old Testament Scriptures or the power of God. After the resurrection, the righteous will be like angels (See 1 Co 15:42,49,52; 2 Co 5:1-8). There will be no marriage or procreation in heaven, for the purpose of procreation would have fulfilled its purpose. Procreation was for the purpose of populating the world. Heaven, however, will be populated by those who were born again in this world.

THE DECEPTIVE QUESTION OF A SCRIBE

(Mt 22:34-40)

12:28-34 See comments Mt 22:34-40. Matthew 22:34 indicates that a scribe (a scholar in the law of Moses) and a Pharisee started this discussion. Since in the context of the event the Pharisees had just been answered by Jesus, a Pharisee may have urged a scribe to approach Jesus in order to continue the Pharisees' efforts to entrap Him. ***No man after that dared ask Him any question:*** They terminated their schemes to trap Jesus in some argument, since they had failed to win any of their arguments. The schemes of entrapment thus stopped, and they moved on to scheming how they might physically take Him.

JESUS AND DAVID

(Mt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44)

12:35-37 See comments Mt 22:41-46. An important point in Mark in the context of these events is that the common people received Jesus (vs 37). They were not part of the religious hierarchy of the religious establishment. The people were not puffed up by their religious training or positions as the religious leadership. They were not part of the religious politics by which the religious leadership constantly intimidated themselves into conformity to the accepted traditions of Judaism. The people, therefore, did not stumble over their pride, but accepted Jesus for who He was. They were the true Israel by faith who accepted Jesus as the Messiah (See comments in intro. to Gl).

REBUKE OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

(Mt 23:1-39; Lk 20:45-47)

12:38-40 See comments Mt 23. Matthew presents a full record of this thorough condemnation that Jesus spoke against the religious leaders of Israel. Mark here presents a condensed version. Though brief, his version is effective in showing Jesus' work to generate rage in the hearts of these religious leaders who would take Him to the cross. Jesus used these religious leaders to take Himself to the cross, since they had fallen from God. Though the Jews could not actually carry out the death sentence, they were the ones who called on the Romans to crucify Jesus. Peter later identified the Jewish leaders as the ones who had to shoulder

the blame for crucifying the Son of God (At 2:23). Leaders would do well to continually check their motives by the word of God. God's leaders must continually caution themselves with God's word in order to guard themselves from working against Him.

THE WIDOW'S SACRIFICE

(Lk 21:1-4)

12:41-44 See comments Lk 21:1-4. *Out of her poverty put in all that she had:* The materialist will never understand why this widow gave so much. Her thanksgiving for what God had done for her motivated her to give all that she had (2 Co 4:15). She had to make the sacrifice in order to pour forth her thanksgiving

to God (See comments 1 Co 15:10). Christianity is of little value to those who are not willing to sacrifice for their faith. Through sacrifice comes growth. But those who are not willing to make sacrifices for their faith will experience little spiritual growth. Those who come to Jesus must check their motives lest they are motivated to associate with the people of God in order to see what they can receive. Christianity is not about receiving, but about giving. The Holy Spirit had the actions of this poor person recorded in Scripture in order to give an example to all those who would come to Jesus (See comments 2 Co 8:1-4; Ph 4:8-18).

CHAPTER 13

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

13:1-37 Mark here records a brief account of the destruction of Jerusalem in comparison to Matthew's account of the event (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21). Jesus startled the disciples when He talked about the destruction of Jerusalem. He then went out to the Mount of Olives where Peter, James, John and Andrew came to Him for more details. It was during this meeting that Jesus explained the end of national Israel. It was now time in His ministry to prepare them for the spiritual kingdom reign He was about to receive at the right hand of God (See Ep 1:20-22). Their nationalistic pride and dreams must be challenged (See At 1:6). Therefore, on this occasion Jesus explained in detail the events surrounding

the end of their Jewish heritage through the consummation of Israel in A.D. 70. Between His ascension and the Jewish calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem there would be forty years. It was during this time that the apostles and early evangelists went throughout the Roman Empire from synagogue to synagogue. They went to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles in fulfillment of Jesus' commission to take the gospel to all nations (16:15; Mt 28:19,20; Rm 1:16). After the destruction of Jerusalem, little is known of their specific evangelistic efforts. However, we do know that within a decade before the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel had gone into all the Roman Empire. This was accomplished by the time of Paul's first imprisonment in A.D. 61,62 (See comments Cl 1:23).

Fulfillment Of The Seedline Promise**(14:1 – 16:20)**

Outline: (1) The plot to kill Jesus (14:1,2), (2) Feast in Simon's house (14:3-11), (3) Jesus and the Passover meal (14:12-16), (4) Judas and Peter (14:17-21), (5) Institution of the Lord's meal (14:22-31), (6) The prayer in Gethsemane (14:32-

42), (7) The betrayal and arrest (14:43-52), (8) The trials (14:53-65), (9) Peter's denials (15:66-72), (10) Formal condemnation of Jesus (15:1-15), (11) The crucifixion (15:16-41), (12) The burial (15:42-47), (13) The resurrection (16:1-8), (14) The appearances (16:9-14), (15) Jesus' final commission (16:15-20)

CHAPTER 14**THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS**

(Mt 26:1-5; Lk 22:1,2)

14:1,2 See comments Mt 26:1-5.

Take Him by trickery and put Him to death: The original scheme of the religious leaders was not to have Jesus publicly executed. They devised a plot to have Him secretly murdered. This religious behavior must not be confused with what God originally revealed to the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai. The religion of the Jews, at this time in the history of Israel, was a religion wherein the leaders had already rejected the will of God. The religious leaders were more interested in the traditions of their fathers than the commandments of God (See comments 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). When Jesus came, He came into conflict with this man-made religion. In this system of religion, one could behave in an evil manner outside the religious traditions. In other words, as long as one kept the traditions, he could behave as the religious leaders were behaving in this context. The same systems of religion continue today as Christians confront those who have created religions after their own traditions. Under the name "Christian" there are still those who have created religions after their own carnal de-

sires, and by doing such, have captivated the loyalty of many adherents.

FEAST IN SIMON'S HOUSE

(Mt 26:6-13)

14:3-11 See comments Mt 26:6-13.

It was a time of preparation for the death of Jesus. At least this one woman realized the gravity of the moment, for according to Jesus she was anointing His body for burial (vs 8). It was this occasion that stimulated Judas to carry out his betrayal scheme that he had already conceived in his heart. We must not confuse this anointing by an unidentified woman who anointed Jesus' head in the house of Simon with the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary in the house of Lazarus as recorded by John (Jn 12:1-8). The anointing of John 12 evidently took place a few days before the anointing recorded by Matthew and Mark (See 14:1; Jn 12:1). In both cases there was complaining concerning the anointing of Jesus. In Simon's house some of the disciples complained about the supposed waste of the spikenard oil. However, in the house of Lazarus it was Judas Iscariot who complained. Regardless of the complaints, Jesus allowed Himself to be anointed for His hour had come to be glorified.

JESUS AND THE PASSOVER MEAL

(Mt 26:17-19; Lk 22:7-13)

14:12-16 The eating of this particular meal was not according to the Passover meal that was commanded in the Sinai law. The disciples, however, assumed that Jesus would eat, on this occasion, the Passover meal. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the meal they ate was actually the Passover meal (See Jn 18:28). For this reason, many Bible students believe that Jesus actually ate a pre-Passover meal with the disciples. He did such because He knew that He would be on the cross as the sacrificial Lamb of God when the actual Passover meal was eaten by the Jews.

JUDAS AND PETER

(Mt 26:21-25; Lk 22:21-38; Jn 13:21-38)

14:17-21 See comments Mt 26:21-25; Jn 13:21-38. **Will betray Me:** See Jn 6:70,71; 13:18. The disciples were not sure what Jesus meant by a betrayal. Nevertheless, each one asked, "Is it I?" Judas had already planned the betrayal plot (vss 10,11). It was now time that the plot be put into action. Jesus let Judas know that He was aware of what had been planned. For the sake of the other disciples, Jesus made this prophecy for their remembrance. They would later recall what He said on this occasion. Their faith would thus be increased because they would realize that Jesus knew what was going to happen at the time these events took place. His going to the cross was not an accident. He did not fall into the hands of men who took control of His

destiny, for it was His destiny to go to the cross.

INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S MEAL

(Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:17-20)

14:22-25 See comments Mt 26:26-29; 1 Co 11:23-34. **Until that day:** Jesus turned the minds of the disciples toward the future. Their thinking was surely in the present circumstances, but He was focused on the cross and the results of it that would be announced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. He would not drink of the cup again with them until He drank it with them in the kingdom of God.

14:26-31 See comments Mt 26:31-35; Jn 14-17. It was at this time that the events and statements of Jesus in John 13-17 took place. Jesus had a private meeting with the apostles as recorded in John 13-17. In the John 13-17 meeting, Jesus made specific promises to the apostles that were applicable only to them. In John 17 He made a specific prayer for the apostles and for those who would believe on Him through their preaching.

THE PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE

(Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:2-12)

14:32-42 See comments Mt 26:36-46. **Peter and James and John:** See 5:37; 9:2; 13:3. **What You will:** See Is 50:5. **The hour has come:** The time had come to fulfill the eternal scheme of redemption that God had planned before the foundation of the world (See Ep 3:8-11; Rv 13:8). The fulfillment of the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 was now at

hand. Satan would be crushed by the sacrifice of the Son of God. However, the heel of the Son would be bruised by the necessity of His death on the cross. It was time for Jesus to make the sacrifice for our deliverance from sin.

THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST

(Mt 26:47-56; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:2-12)

14:43-50 See comments Mt 26:47-56. From this time on, things begin to happen quickly in reference to the trials, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Throughout the next three days the disciples as a group would experience the greatest trauma of their lives. Expectations would be crushed. Their hopes in Jesus would be dashed. They would be in a state of disillusionment until Jesus redirected them through several appearances that would take place after the resurrection. After the trauma of all these events, they would be prepared to go forth for Jesus.

14:51,52 *There followed Him a certain young man:* There is no mention of this incident in the other records of these events. If the house where the meal was eaten was that of Mary—the location where the disciples later met (At 1:13; 12:12)—then this young man may have followed Jesus and the disciples to Gethsemane. This young man could have possibly been John Mark. Mark makes this brief statement here in order to identify himself as the writer of the document. After the resurrection, and during the time of great joy after the church was established in Acts 2, the early disciples would have recalled with humor what had

happened to him. Their memory of the incident would later help them identify the author of this document.

THE TRIALS

(Mt 26:57-68; Lk 22:54-65; Jn 18:24)

14:53-65 See comments Mt 26:57-68. Of all the activities that transpired during these last few hours of Jesus' earthly ministry, Mark records the least of all the inspired writers. He records the trial before the high priest and council (vss 64,65). He records the confirmation of the elders, scribes and the Sanhedrin early in the morning after the arrest (15:1). And finally, he records the time when Jesus is handed over to Pilate for approval by this Roman official to have Him crucified (15:1ff; see At 2:23). It was not Mark's purpose to carry out a lengthy description of all the events that transpired. If Mark's record, and that of the other New Testament recorders of these events, had been written by normal historians, then certainly they would have recorded lengthy accounts of what happened. One proof of their inspiration by the Holy Spirit in writing these documents is in the fact that their accounts of what happened to the Founder of Christianity is recorded in a brief manner (See Jn 21:25).

PETER'S DENIALS

(Mt 26:58,69-75; Lk 22:54-62; Jn 18:15-18,25-27)

14:66-72 See comments Mt 26:69-75; Jn 18:15-18,25-27. Though it is difficult to place the three denials of Peter in chronological order during the trials, all accounts together mention that there

were three occasions on which he denied Jesus. **He wept:** Peter did deny Jesus, but he repented. Judas was remorseful and returned the pieces of silver. But he later hung himself. There was a difference between the reactions of the two

men to their discovery of what Jesus said each would do. Peter's reaction led him to return to faithfulness with a stronger conviction. Judas' reaction led him to further guilt, and subsequently, to his own suicide.

CHAPTER 15

FORMAL CONDEMNATION OF JESUS

(Mt 27:1,2,11-26; Lk 22:66-71; 23:1-25)

15:1 See comments Mt 27:1. At this point in the records of the final events of Jesus' ministry, one should carefully consider all four records of the gospel, especially the details that Luke gives (See the chronology of Jesus' life in the *Encyclopedic Study Guide*). It is not known exactly when Judas committed suicide during these final events. His hanging of himself may have taken place during the time Jesus was taken before the Jewish council and Pilate (See Mt 27:3-10; At 1:18,19).

15:2-5 See comments Mt 27:2,11-14; Jn 18:28-38. John gives a more detailed account of the questioning of Jesus by Pilate.

15:6-15 See comments Mt 27:15-26; Jn 18:39 – 19:16. **Was imprisoned with ... insurrectionists:** From this account by Mark we learn that Barabbas was an insurrectionist (terrorist) against the Roman government. He was possibly a member of the Zealot group of Jews whose ambition it was to free Palestine from Roman occupation. **What evil has He done:** On this occasion and others it seems that Pilate was trying to find some reason to release Jesus. It was a custom

of the Roman governor to release someone during the Passover/Pentecost feast. This was done in order to appease the most radical Jews of the Roman Empire who were in Jerusalem at this time. The nationalistic emotions of the multitudes, therefore, were running high. As governor of the region, Pilate had to make compromises with the intense Jewish multitudes in order to prevent riots in the city. His compromises sent Jesus to the cross.

THE CRUCIFIXION

(Mt 27:27-44; Lk 23:26-43; Jn 19:16-27)

15:16-20 See comments Mt 27:27-44; Jn 19:16-27. When we consider that the One who was struck and mocked in these few passages was the One who created all things, including those who were mocking and striking Him (Cl 1:16), we realize that God is far greater than the imagination of our minds. No false god that one could possibly conceive would behave as we see Jesus as God behaving here. He had the power to call on the angels of heaven for His own deliverance, but He did not issue the command. He allowed Himself to be humiliated in order to provide redemption for those who mocked and struck Him. The God of the Bible is certainly beyond what mortal minds can create in their minds, for no

man-made religion of the world has imagined this God of grace.

15:21-32 It is in this context that numerous Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled. *Divided His garments:* See Ps 22:18. *With Him they crucified two thieves:* See Is 53:9,12. *He was numbered with the transgressors:* See Is 53:12. *Blasphemed Him, wagging their heads:* See Ps 22:6,7; 69:7. *Chief priests also mocking:* See Ps 69:19. These and many other prophecies could not have been fulfilled by accident. Their fulfillment can be explained only in the fact that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah (See Lk 24:44).

15:33-41 See comments Mt 27:45-46. From the viewpoint of Satan, this was his greatest hour. He had finally brought to an end the threat against his kingdom of darkness by the revelation of the Seed. Satan had waged war against the Seed of woman from the time God promised that the Seed would crush his head in Genesis 3:15 up to this time when he certainly believed that he had been victorious over the work of God. But what he did not understand was that God had used his evil work all along in order to put on the cross the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). In their own ignorance, therefore, Satan and all his demons would be rejoicing at this moment in history. However, their rejoicing would soon be turned to mourning because in three days Jesus would rise from the dead (16:9). What seemingly would have been Satan's greatest hour actually turned out to be his worst. The plan of God's redemption that

had been predestined before the creation of the world was accomplished (Ep 3:8-12). The Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world had now in reality been slain (Rv 13:8).

THE BURIAL

(Mt 27:57-66; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:31-42)

15:42-47 See comments Mt 27:57-66; Jn 19:31-42. Unlike those religious leaders of Jerusalem who had moved the multitudes to cry out to crucify Jesus, Joseph, who was one of the Sanhedrin council, saw in Jesus the possible fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah (See Jn 3:1ff). Because he was a member of the council he could make this request, whereas the disciples had scattered because of fear and disillusionment. Jesus was subsequently laid in Joseph's own tomb that had been cut out of solid rock. *Mary ... and Mary ... observed where He was laid:* It is significant that Mark includes this statement. These two women knew where the tomb was located. Some have speculated that when they came to the tomb early on the first day of the week three days later, that they actually went to the wrong tomb. The wrong tomb that they went to at that time was empty. In their excitement and expectation of Jesus' resurrection, they supposedly ran to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples thus stood up on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed that He had been raised from the dead. But such ridiculous theories are only the speculations that have been proposed by those who can find no logical reason to disprove the resurrection of

Jesus. The women knew the exact location of the tomb. We can consider them valid witnesses that the tomb was empty.

CHAPTER 16

THE RESURRECTION

(Mt 28:1-8; Lk 24:1-8; Jn 20:1)

16:1 See comments Mt 28:1-8. In Mark's account of what these women did he emphasizes the fact that the women brought the spices after the Sabbath in order to go and prepare the body of Jesus for its final rest. Matthew and Luke emphasize the fact that the women brought the spices to the tomb. The customary burial preparation for Jesus' body was done on Friday at the time of the burial. However, the complete preparations were not finished. Therefore, the women here seek to finalize all preparations. They possibly want to pay their final respects to the One they thought would be the Messiah of Israel. The fact that they had earlier bought spices to prepare the body for final rest is evidence that they did not expect that Jesus would rise from the dead.

16:2-8 *Who will roll away the stone:*

These women were not expecting a resurrection. They expected that everything would be as it was when they left the tomb the Friday evening before. **When they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away:** Too often in life we worry about large stones in our lives. We should look up to God. We will find that He has rolled away the stones. And so it was here. The great obstacle that would hinder their proposed work had been taken away by God. God had sent an angel to do that which they could not do.

They said nothing to anyone: That is, they said nothing to anyone on their way to tell Peter and the other apostles (Mt 28:8).

THE APPEARANCES

Some Bible students have questioned whether the last twelve verses of Mark should be a part of the book. They believe that some biblical copyist added these verses to the book after it was written by Mark. The reason for this is that these verses are absent from the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts and several other older manuscripts. It is believed that a copyist wrote these verses in order to summarize the appearances. The verses were subsequently added later because another copyist thought they were a part of the original manuscript. However, there are several reasons why many Bible students believe that they were a part of the original autograph of Mark. (1) The Vaticanus retained space for the twelve verses at the end of Mark. This indicates that the copyist of the Vaticanus was aware of the existence of the verses at the time the Vaticanus was produced. It could also be that the Vaticanus copyist was planning to add the verses at a later date when more manuscript evidence was made available. (2) The similarities between the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts would possibly classify them to be from the same family of manuscripts. If this is true, then

their evidence for the development of Greek texts should be measured against other families of Greek manuscripts. They would be only one source of evidence for text production that should be compared with many other families. (3) Consider the above in reference to other sources of manuscript evidence. All of the major manuscripts, except the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, include these verses. These manuscripts would include the Alexandrinus, Ephraimi and Bezae. (4) Consider also that the *cursives* are also in favor of the verses as a part of the original autograph. (5) Consider also the writings of early church scholars. These verses were recognized by the Shepherd of Hermas (A.D. 150), Justin Martyr (A.D. 160) and Irenaeus (A.D. 177). Because of the above points it is the conviction here that these verses are a part of Mark's original account of the days immediately after the resurrection of Jesus and should be considered a part of the original autograph. There is nothing that is doctrinally different in the verses from what is taught in the rest of the New Testament on this subject. Every doctrinal point that is stated in these verses by Mark is also taught throughout the New Testament.

16:9-13 See comments Mt 28:9,10. ***When Jesus was risen early on the first day of the week:*** This statement makes it clear that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, or Sunday. Since the resurrection was on Sunday, this day has been special to Christians throughout the centuries. It was on this day that Christians in the 1st century assembled (At 20:7; 1

Co 16:1,2). This day also became known as the Lord's Day (Rv 1:10). ***They ... did not believe:*** The fact that they did not believe the first reports of the women indicates that they were not expecting the resurrection. They were in such a state of shock and disappointment immediately after the crucifixion that they could not believe the report of the women. ***Two of them as they walked:*** See Lk 24:13-35.

16:14 *Afterward He appeared to the eleven:* This verse indicates that the first appearance to the apostles after the resurrection is under consideration. ***He rebuked them for their unbelief:*** Jesus rebuked the eleven apostles for not believing the report of those who first saw Him after the resurrection. ***Hardness of heart:*** The apostles were evidently still suffering from despondency as a result of the death of the One they thought would be the Messiah of Israel. Their discouragement would not allow them to believe again after such great disappointment. Therefore, they were still in a state of shock at the time the women reported the resurrection (Lk 24:33-43; Jn 20:19).

JESUS' FINAL COMMISSION

In Mark 16:14-20 Jesus made a very significant promise to the apostles and the early disciples. Unfortunately, these verses that include this promise are often misunderstood. In Mark 16:14-20 Jesus does not define how the miraculous signs about which He talked would be carried out by those who believed. He simply says that "those who believe" (the disciples) would do wonderful things. It

is probable that the event of the statements of verses 15-18 took place at a different time and occasion than the events and statements of Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:44-49. There is no reason to assume that these are all parallel accounts of the same appearance of Jesus before His ascension. After all, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days after His resurrection and before the ascension (At 1:3).

It is necessary to understand Mark 16:14-20 by first noting that four different meetings or events are mentioned in the context of these verses. These events or meetings took place at different times after Jesus' resurrection and when the disciples went forth to preach. It is important to understand the chronology of these verses in order to understand the application of the statements of Jesus.

Verse 14 is an appearance to the eleven apostles immediately after the resurrection. Mark here uses indirect discourse. Indirect discourse is identified by the use of third person pronouns. Emphasis is on the one or ones who are being discussed. These are the words of Mark who records this historical narrative of what Jesus said and did in relation to the apostles. The antecedent of the pronouns of the indirect discourse of Mark's narrative of these last verses is established here. The pronouns of the indirect discourses, therefore, must refer back to the eleven apostles of verse 14. The events in this verse took place sometime before the speech of verses 15-18. There is no reason to connect the rebuking by Jesus in this verse with the speech

that Mark records in verses 15-18.

16:15,16 Beginning with the word "go" in verse 15, and extending through the end of verse 18, Mark records the direct discourse of Jesus. Mark is recording what Jesus actually said on possibly another occasion than the occasion of verse 14. These concluding statements in the earthly presence of Jesus that are included here are Mark's concluding narrative of the ministry of Jesus. **Go into all the world:** Jesus now makes it clear to the disciples that the gospel is for all the world, not just the Jews (Jn 10:16). They must go to every village, town and city of the world (Mt 28:19,20). No community must be left untouched by the proclamation of the gospel. **Preach the gospel to every creature:** This one statement designates what is to be done (preach), what is to be preached (the gospel), and to whom the preaching must go (every creature). The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). This is what must be proclaimed to all the world. The gospel must be preached to every person because every person is a sinner (Rm 3:9,10). **He who believes and is baptized:** Those who believe will respond to God's grace through the cross by immersion in water for the remission of their sins (See comments At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6). Those who do not believe will not respond by obedience to the gospel. One's belief, therefore, must move him to obedience (See Hb 11:6; Js 2:14-26). **Will be saved:** Jesus makes it very clear that salvation comes as a result of faith in Jesus and

one's response to God's grace that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). If one does not respond to the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, then there is no hope for salvation (See Jn 3:3-5; At 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pt 3:21). **He who does not believe:** It is useless to talk about obedience to the gospel when one does not believe. Obedience to the gospel is a response to what God has done for all men through Jesus. But if one does not believe in the sacrificial offering of Jesus on the cross, then he will not obey the gospel.

16:17,18 Signs: The miraculous signs would be for the confirmation of the message and messengers (See Jn 3:2; At 15:12; Rm 15:19; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:3,4). **Those who believe:** The group of "those who believe" of the worldwide call through the preaching of the gospel in verse 17 finds its antecedent in "he who believes" of verse 16. All those who believe and are baptized form the group of "those who believe." Reference in these verses is to the group of Christians in general, not the apostles of verse 14. These disciples would work miracles as a group. From this we would not affirm that everyone of this Christian group would work signs. The passage simply says that the signs would follow the group of "those who believe." The fulfillment of this promise in the book of Acts interprets what is here meant. Not everyone in the church—the group of those who believed—worked miracles. Only those on whom the apostles had laid their hands were empowered to work miracles (See comments At 8:18; Rm 1:11). Therefore,

the interpretation here is that the group worked miracles by the representation of those who could, by the laying on of the apostles' hands, command miracles to occur. **Speak with new languages:** They would speak languages of men that they had never before studied. This promise was in the context of the great commission to evangelize the world. Therefore, the gift of languages was God's confirmation that the church was the new Israel (See comments 1 Co 14:21,22). In reference to evangelism, the disciples would not have to spend months in learning a new language in order to preach the gospel to a particular cultural group (See At 2:2-11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Co 12:10). **Take up serpents:** See At 28:5. **If they drink any deadly thing:** The text says "if." In other words, if the disciples' enemies seek to kill them, they will not die from such murder plots. Neither would the disciples intentionally take up serpents or drink that which is deadly. The promise that is given here is in reference to their protection, not in reference to the disciples proving their faith. **Lay hands on the sick:** See At 3:6-8; 5:12-16; 9:40; 20:10-12.

16:19 After the Lord had spoken to them: Mark again turns to indirect discourse. He mentions events that are parallel to the events of Acts 1:6-9. He refers to the ascension of Jesus to heaven. Therefore, keep in mind that this event took place about forty days after the event of verse 14. The pronoun "them" here finds its antecedent in the indirect discourse of verse 14. Reference is thus to the apostles.

16:20 *And they went forth:* The event of this verse took place at least seven days after the event of verse 19. The apostles went forth only after they had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. The antecedent of the pronoun “they” of this verse is discovered in the indirect discourse of verse 14. The pronoun “them” in verses 14,19,20 refers to the apostles. However, in Mark’s record of Jesus’ statements in verses 15-18, the pronoun “them” would refer to people other than the apostles. Reference is to those who believe and obey the gospel. Therefore, not only would the apostles do miraculous works, “those who believe” would do the same.

“Those who believe” in verse 17 will work miracles. This is certainly a reference to the promise of Joel 2:28 (See comments Acts 2:16,17). This statement of Jesus also has in view Acts 2:38,39. It is also a promise that the working of miraculous signs would go beyond the apostles themselves. This is what Joel prophesied. Jesus does not explain how the believers would receive the privilege to work signs. He does not explain in these verses when they would receive this privilege. He simply states that signs would follow them as a group, the church, as a result of their belief and obedience of the gospel by immersion. We must look forward to rest of the New Testament in order to discover who and when the miraculous gifts would go to the group of those who believe. Therefore, since Jesus does not in this context explain the how and when, we must allow the New Testament to be the final com-

mentary on how the miracles would go to the group of those who believe and when this would take place.

It is also significant to notice that Jesus is here promising that those who believe would ordinarily receive the privilege to work signs. Their reception of this privilege is assumed in the text. He does not specify that only the special group of Christ-sent apostles would be given the privilege to work signs. In fact, the nature of the promise of Joel 2:28 that “all flesh” would receive the “good things” of the Spirit is in contrast to a select group receiving the Spirit as in the Old Testament period. He does not say that there would be restrictions or qualifications for them to receive the Spirit other than “believing” and “obeying” the gospel. He simply states that all those who believe and are baptized would receive the privilege of working signs.

Another important point to remember is that the receiving of the privilege to work miraculous signs was not given to those who refused to believe and obey. It was for those who had already believed and obeyed through baptism. In other words, the working of signs was not a condition for salvation, neither was it a signal of salvation. It was a blessing for the purpose of confirming the preached word of God before unbelievers, as well as for the edification of the church through the gift of prophecy. Those who went forth had already believed and obeyed the gospel by baptism. Those who have not believed and obeyed the gospel, therefore, have no promise of a reception of the Holy Spirit in any man-

ner or through any means. There is no teaching in the entire New Testament that affirms that the giving of the Holy Spirit in any manner was for the purpose of saving individuals (See comments At 10,11).

Consider also that Jesus did not state that the signs would necessarily follow every believer. He indicated that the signs would follow the believers as a group. "Those who believe" indicates that the corporate body of believers (the church) would be followed by the signs wherever they were or went. Not everyone of the group of believers would be able to work the signs. However, there would be those in every region of believers who could. The signs would follow the believers as long as they were a part of the family of God. Again, the book of Acts historically interprets what Jesus meant in this context. Only those on whom the apostles laid their hands could work signs as the apostles (See comments At 8:18). The historical event of what actually happened in the book of Acts explains what Jesus is here mentioning in a brief promise.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Christ-sent apostles in Acts 2, the apostles then went forth to preach. In verses 19,20 of this context the pronoun "them" finds its antecedent in verse 14. The "them" was the group of the Christ-apostles—Matthias was later added to their number (At 1:26). The going forth of the apostles took place many days after the commission of verses 15-18 because they waited in Jerusalem until the coming of the Spirit (Lk 24:49).

There are fifty days between Passover—when Jesus was crucified—and Pentecost. After being in the tomb for three days, Jesus appeared to them during forty of the fifty days before Pentecost (At 1:3). Therefore, they waited in Jerusalem for about seven days before the Spirit came.

And preached everywhere: When the apostles went forth from Jerusalem, they preached everywhere. It was several years after the events of Acts 2 before the apostles personally went forth from Jerusalem to preach in other areas. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem from ten to fifteen years after Pentecost in order to evangelize those Jews who came to Jerusalem every year from all over the world for the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts. Those who were converted during these feasts returned to all the world. In this manner, the apostles first accomplished their work of this commission to go into all the world. It was not that they would personally go into all the world at the beginning of the gospel dispensation. They went into all the world through those they taught the gospel in Jerusalem when Jews came to the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts (See comments Is 2:1-4). Every convert in Jerusalem, was a missionary to all the world (See At 8:4).

The Lord working with them: The Lord is given credit for working the miraculous signs through the medium of those who went forth. This indicates that their work and word originated from God, not man (See Jn 3:2; Hb 2:3,4). As the apostles went forth, they laid hands on "those who believed" in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy

Spirit (See comments At 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). Therefore, “those who believe” were able to work miracles only if they had had hands laid on them by the apostles. This is the historical commentary of what actually happened. Therefore, when the apostles died, there was no one to lay hands on those who believed in order that they carry on with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. When the last Christ-sent apostle died, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit among those who believed ceased to be passed on to other disciples (See comments 1 Co 13:8-10). When the last person died on whom the last apostle had laid hands, the age

for the open manifestation of the work of God through confirming miracles ceased, though God continued to work behind the scenes of natural law in the lives of the disciples, which work continues even to this day. The word of God had been firmly confirmed by miracles. There was no more the need to confirm the word of God in such a manner for those who already believed. God does not have to reconfirm His word today. It is sufficient within itself to produce a faith that is acceptable to Him (Rm 10:17; Hb 11:6). It is for this reason that the word of God is able to supply one unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16,17).