



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

MARK

BIBLE COMPANION



GOSPEL

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the Gospel of Mark heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Mark (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

THE GOSPEL OF ACTION



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 1**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark Introduction—1:3, Mark 1:1-15,** and **Mark 1:16-45**

One of the first New Testament books to be written was the Gospel of Mark. Though John Mark was not an apostle, he traveled with Paul and his uncle, Barnabas, on the first missionary journey. By far, John Mark's closest relationship was with Simon Peter. This Gospel has long been considered Simon Peter's account, as told to John Mark. Some have said the facts of the Gospel are from Peter and the explanations are from Paul.

John Mark specifically wrote this Gospel for the Roman mind—the strong man who ruled the world for a millennium. The Romans brought a forced peace to the world with its strong dictatorship and—with it—justice, good roads, law and order, and protection. In the days when the Caesars ruled, the world longed for mercy and all they got was power. No man dared resist it, and fleeing the realm was impossible. It was in that day God sent a message to the Gentile world through the writer, John Mark.

Considering Peter as the source, no wonder the Gospel of Mark is a Gospel of action. Peter was that kind of man. The Lord Jesus here lays aside His robes of royalty that we saw in Matthew and girds Himself with the towel of service. Jesus is the King in Matthew and the Servant in Mark—God's servant. The style of this shorter Gospel is brief and blunt, pertinent and

pithy, simple and sweet, stripped of all excess verbiage. Mark goes right to the point, to the point of action and accomplishment. He answers the question: “Can Jesus do the job?”

The four Gospels can be thought of like a newspaper. Matthew carries the advertising and announcements: “Behold, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Dr. Luke carries the special features—the songs of Christmas and the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. John carries the editorials and the columnists—like the discourses on the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the upper room discourse. But the Gospel of Mark carries flaming headlines. “Jesus Came” is one of his expressions. Other headlines are “Jesus Only” and “He is Risen.” Mark pictures Jesus going about “doing good and healing all those who were oppressed of the devil.” In the beginning of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus in all the winsomeness of His humanity and in the fullness of His deity went about doing good. But then He died and rose again, and it wasn’t until then that He said to His own, “Go to all the world and preach the gospel.”

As we begin in the first chapter of the Gospel, you’ll see the intensity of Jesus’ ministry. There’s probably more content in this first chapter of Mark than any other chapter in the Bible. It covers the ministry of John the Baptist, showing how he fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi. It follows Jesus through a busy Sabbath, demonstrates His authority over the demonic realm, and concludes with a mighty work of immediately cleansing a leper. Yet, despite the pressure of a busy life, Jesus still took time to pray—getting up before dawn to be alone with His Father.

John Mark wrote of the facts of the gospel—the coming of Jesus the Christ into the world, and His experience here for three years in public ministry. First, he tells us of the messenger, John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. He preached “the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins.” John didn’t baptize people in order to forgive their sins; instead his ministry was about preparing the way for people to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

In every way, John the Baptist was remarkable. His message, his dress, his diet. Clearly his life had been set aside for this ministry. His lineage was Levite. He should have been a priest ministering in the temple in Jerusalem like his father, but God called him to be a prophet in the wilderness, where people went to him. He stirred the crowds with his preaching.

But John knew who he was and he knew to whom he was to point people. “This One who is coming is so much greater than I am.” *I’m not even worthy to unloose His sandals*, John said. “I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (1:8). John knew the difference when Jesus walked out of the obscurity of 30 years of quiet training in Nazareth. He steps into the pages and identifies with the human family and asks John to baptize Him, too.

More than any other name, Mark calls the Lord, “Jesus,” His common name. He then tells us about when Jesus (the second person of the Godhead) is baptized and comes out of the water. The Spirit of God (the third person) comes like a dove upon Him and a voice out of heaven, God the Father, says, “This is my beloved Son.” The Trinity comes to our attention and is heaven’s seal upon Jesus as God’s Son and the Man ready for ministry.

JESUS IS TEMPTED

Immediately (one of Mark’s favorite words), the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness for a time of initiation. Remember the question Mark wanted to prove was, “Can Jesus do the job?” Other men couldn’t stand up under temptation. Adam didn’t make it. Noah failed miserably after the flood. Abraham failed. Moses and David did, too. Will Jesus?

So, for 40 days Satan tempted Jesus, and He did not fail. We’ll never know the depth of the pain He suffered in this wilderness, but we do see that after it was over, animals (below Him) and angels (above Him) ministered to Him.

After the temptation, the Lord moves into ministry, specifically with works and words that illustrate the Servant, preaching the gospel of God, saying the kingdom of God is at hand. “Repent and believe the gospel.”

This matter of faith is the same today. When you turn to Christ in faith, you’ll turn from something and that turning from something is repentance.

JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

As Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, He calls His disciples to follow Him. The first time was in Jerusalem, but His men went back to fishing once they got home. This time, however, Jesus calls them to apostleship. Peter (remember these are his memories) tells Jesus, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). In other words, *Let me alone; I’m such a failure*. But our Lord didn’t give up on him.

Now the disciples leave their nets and follow Him into a busy life of ministry.

The first section here tells us about a typical day with Jesus. It happened to be the Sabbath in Capernaum, Jesus' ministry headquarters (since He was rejected in Nazareth). That Sabbath morning, Jesus went into the synagogue and taught. The locals were "astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22).

The synagogue had nothing vital in that day, but when our Lord came, His message startled people. Something was very different about this Teacher!

JESUS ORDERS A DEMON AROUND

Interrupting Jesus as He taught, a man being controlled by a demon spoke out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

From across the room, Jesus called out the demon and said, "Be quiet, and come out of him" (1:23-24). After this miracle, Jesus' fame spread throughout northern Israel.

Historical evidence shows demonism was rampant throughout the entire Roman Empire during Jesus' ministry years. Mark intentionally records this miracle first because it was over the spiritual realm where only God can control. Mark proved Jesus' credentials—His authority in His teaching and the demonstration of power only God has. The people couldn't understand, but the demons recognized Jesus right away.

JESUS HEALS OTHERS

Later that same day, Jesus heals Peter's wife's mother as well as many, many more people. "He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons" (1:34).

This is the beginning of the gospel. By His teaching, Jesus was preparing them for that which is salvation—His death and His resurrection. His teaching will not save us; it is only through His death for us on the Cross we can be saved.

JESUS HEALS A LEPER

The last miracle in this chapter was a hard case. Leprosy. This disease was a killer, both physically and psychologically. This leper came to Jesus pleading for Him to heal him. “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said, “I am willing; be cleansed” (1:40-41).

The miracle was immediate; the man was completely healed. Jesus asked him not to tell anyone—as it was, Jesus could hardly move around anymore because of the crowds that swarmed Him, looking for miracles.

But instead of keeping quiet about it, this walking miracle went out and made it known. He “blazed abroad,” meaning he “set a forest fire.” So Jesus had to leave the towns and go to the countryside, where even then people came to Him from every direction.

NEXT: Follow Jesus as He travels around Galilee, teaching and healing people of demons and diseases.

LESSON 2

“WE’VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE ...”



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 2–3**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 2:1-23** and **Mark 2:23–3:35**

Jesus told the man He healed of leprosy not to tell anyone—but instead, the man told *everyone*. The crowds, eager for more miracles, kept Jesus from His real work. So, He had to get away for a while. He didn’t want healing to be what people came to Him for, He wanted to preach the gospel; He wanted to give them eternal life. He didn’t want the miracles to obscure the gospel.

Once Jesus returned to Capernaum (His ministry headquarters), He went to Simon Peter’s house. The crowd heard He was back, so they packed the house to listen to Jesus teach them.

Jesus’ emphasis was on the integrity and inerrancy of the Word of God. Such should be our confidence, too, especially when we see how God uses it in our lives. This is God’s Word and it will accomplish what He intends.

While the crowd, crammed into Simon Peter’s house, listened to Jesus, a band of friends came down the road carrying a stretcher holding their disabled friend. Relentless to get their friend in front of Jesus, they made a more creative plan. Since they were denied access at the door and the window, they went to the roof. They stripped off the straw and made a hole over where Jesus was teaching.

Imagine what it was like for Jesus below when debris began falling from above Him. Everyone looked up to see this young man being lowered down by his friends. Don't you think Jesus smiled a bit when He saw the friends' faith?

"Son, your sins are forgiven you." The faith of these friends brought the young man to Jesus where he could meet Jesus for himself. Please understand—we are saved by our own personal, individual faith. As wonderful as it is to have godly parents or friends, it won't save you. You'll have to exert faith yourself. These friends brought this young man on a stretcher where he could hear the Lord Jesus deal with him individually and personally. First Jesus acknowledged the friends' faith that brought him there, and then Jesus dealt personally with the man.

What we need today are more stretcher bearers—men and women to go out and bring in their friends so they can hear the gospel. So many are paralyzed today in their sin. Bring them in where they can hear the Lord Jesus deal with them personally and say, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

Now in that crowded house where Jesus talked with these young men, some other men, religious scribes, thought, *Why does Jesus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?*

Now they're wrong in the first question; right in the second. Jesus wasn't speaking blasphemies. But it's true only God can forgive sin. No judge has the right to let a criminal off; a judge's business is to enforce the law. God is the moral ruler of this universe. Having made the laws, He obeys those laws. You and I are guilty before God; we need His forgiveness of our sins, but He forgives—not just because He's big hearted; He forgives us because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. The Lord Jesus was not speaking blasphemy because He was God and He'd come to the earth to provide salvation, even for this man here.

Notice these men didn't say this, they merely thought it. Jesus read their hearts and tried to draw them out. But they knew better—they had argued with Jesus before and always came away with a bloody nose.

Jesus wanted to engage them. "Which is easier?" He asks, "to forgive this man or say to him, 'Rise and walk?'" Though they didn't answer, they probably thought, *"It's impossible for anybody but God to do either one,"* and that's right. Then the Lord Jesus said, "So that you know I have the power to forgive sin, I'm going to say to this man, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.'"

And the man did just that. Everyone was amazed and glorified God and told each other, “We’ve never before seen anything like this.”

MORE DISCIPLES CALLED TO FOLLOW

When Jesus went north (and people still followed Him), He introduced Himself to Levi, or Matthew, a tax collector. “Follow Me,” He said, and Matthew did.

Very soon after, Matthew invited Jesus to dinner at his house so his friends, many publicans and sinners, could also meet Jesus. Apparently, there wasn’t a good man on the guest list, and the religious people in town pointed that out to Jesus.

Jesus answered their pride with a humorous question. *“Do you invite the doctor over your house when you’re healthy?”* No, only when you’re sick. Jesus said there was only one kind of person in that day (and in our day)—sinners. No one is righteous, though the Pharisees thought they were.

Jesus went on to say that it’s more important to be related to God and to have fellowship with Him than just to look religious. The best thing is to enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus and love Him.

But some anchor themselves in the old way, in this case, the Laws Moses gave. But Jesus said He didn’t come just to patch up an old shirt. He wants to do something new. He came to provide a new robe of righteousness that the sinner who trusts Him can wear and that will enable Him to stand before Almighty God. Jesus was everything the old Law taught but with a new mission—to die for the sins of the world. He wants to put the person God makes new in this new garment. Just like you put new wine in new wine skins. This is a tremendous thing.

We come now to two incidents that illustrate Jesus’ new way of thinking. One was a secular spot outside in a corn field when Jesus’ disciples plucked ears of corn to eat—which the religious said was work, thus, breaking the Sabbath. The second was in the synagogue, a sacred spot, when Jesus healed a man with a deformed hand—also considered work on the Sabbath.

Did He really break the Sabbath in these two incidents? No, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, He said. He refused to argue the issue with the religious leaders. The letter of the law was not to be imposed when it brought hardship on one of God’s servants. Jesus came to complete the Law and do good.

The religious leaders likely planted the man with a deformed hand right where Jesus would see him. They wanted to trap Him. Actually, what they did was a compliment. They said, “Of course, He’ll heal him” even if it was the Sabbath. They’re looking for any excuse to bring a charge against Him. And, Jesus didn’t disappoint. He heals the man on the spot. On the Sabbath. Jesus says, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” Now, the Lord Jesus broke through all of their red tape and got to the heart of God’s purpose in giving the Sabbath day originally to Israel.

The Lord Jesus looked and, for a moment, He got angry—then grieved by their hard hearts. He carried that awful grief with Him all the time He walked with us.

These two events on the Sabbath marked Jesus’ break with the religious rulers. From here on, these bloodhounds of hate got on Jesus’ trail and never let up until they folded their arms beneath His cross. This is the beginning of the plot to put Jesus to death.

And Jesus knew it. He withdrew tactfully at this time, back to Galilee, for His hour had not yet come. When the time was right, He moved into the face of all opposition in Jerusalem.

Wherever Jesus went, crowds from everywhere followed Him. Wherever they went the disciples had to keep Jesus from getting mobbed by desperate people who wanted to be healed. Our human family—how needy we are!

JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

In God’s sovereign purpose, Jesus then chose and ordained His twelve apostles. Notice Jesus did the choosing, and He’s the one responsible for them. The same is true for us. If God has saved you and begun a good work in you, then He’s going to stick right with you. He’s going to see you through.

This is a new season for everyone and, frankly, many were trying to figure out where Jesus got His power. Some said Satan gave Jesus the power to engage in spiritual warfare with demons. Jesus pointed out how crazy that idea was—to use Satan to cast out demons? That’s a house divided against itself and it would not stand. The Lord Jesus does nothing by the power of Satan. Instead, Jesus was doing everything in the power of the Holy Spirit. When they accused Him of doing the work of Beelzebub, they rejected the testimony of the Son of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit—a sin

impossible to forgive. That sin isn't possible today because Jesus is not here in person. Jesus Christ died for all sin, not just some sin. You cannot commit a sinful act today that He'll not forgive you for tomorrow when you come to Him in repentance.

This new relationship is so strong that it eclipses all other relationships. Today if you are in Christ, you are closer to Him than His physical mother and brothers in that day. The important thing is to be rightly related to God in Christ. When you receive Him as Savior, then you have the right to be called His son and His daughter. He invites you to come closest to Him.

NEXT: Miracles, miracles, miracles.

LESSON 3

STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 4–5**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 4** and **Mark 5**

Let's now follow in Jesus' footsteps at the height of His popularity. Constantly busy, Jesus got physically exhausted. One time He fell asleep in a ship during a storm. The disciples had to wake Him up. But even then, He told the sea to "be muzzled!"—and it obeyed!

In this season, the Gospel of Mark invites us to listen in to Jesus' unique style of teaching. We call them parables, stories meant to communicate a thoughtful meaning.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER (4:3-9)

Jesus told one of His first parables about a farmer's field. The sower is the Son of Man and the seed is the Word of God. Jesus describes the three areas where the seed fell. The first seeds represent the unsaved who do not accept the Word of God. They fell on the wayside where the birds ate them (the devil takes away the Word), the stony ground where the sun withers it (these are people who let affliction and persecution turn them from God; in their flesh they have no spiritual depth), and finally, on thorny ground where the thorns choked it. These folks let the cares of the world distract them. So many people today let the world shut them out from God.

Then He describes what happened to the quarter of the seed that fell on good ground. These are the ones who receive the Word and are saved. But even these souls have different degrees of bearing fruit. Later on His way to the Cross, Jesus called Himself “the vine” and said He wants us to bring forth fruit. Those who belong to Jesus will bear fruit.

Jesus warns us, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Meaning, “Stop—look—and listen!” The disciples didn’t understand Jesus’ parable. Later they asked why He now was teaching in parables.

Jesus’ answer was strategic. His enemies now rejected His teaching, and the multitudes had become indifferent to spiritual truth. They may have been interested in miracles, but not the spiritual lesson the miracles taught. Jesus said He now resorts to parables to engage them. The parables confused the antagonistic or the apathetic, but those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness would be filled and those who wanted spiritual truth would have their eyes opened. People understand what they want to understand, and they must want to understand them before these things can be made real to them.

If your heart and eyes are open and you want to know, then the Spirit of God will make great truth real to your heart.

If you are lost and turn away from Jesus’ teaching, you will continue to be lost. At one point all of us are lost. It’s your reaction and reception of the Word of God that’s going to determine whether you’ll be saved or not. What about you? Do you trust Christ? Will you accept Him as Savior?

This is the way the seed falls. What kind of a hearer are you today? Are you the one among thorns? Or the wayside? Or thorny ground? Or does the Word fall on good ground? That’s the important thing.

CANDLE UNDER A BUSHEL (4:21-22)

The next parable of action deals with light. Light creates responsibility. We’re held responsible to the degree that we’ve had light given us. You and I were in darkness until the light of the gospel got through to us. We get the impression that man is a sinner because of his weakness or because of his ignorance. But Paul says very candidly in Romans 1 that when man knew God, they glorified Him not as God. Man is a *willful* sinner. With light comes responsibility. We are lost, and if we do not accept the Light, if we do not accept Him, we remain lost.

This parable of action invites us to believe God’s Word. Faith is acting upon what God has said.

SEED GROWTH

The next parable of action is a bit unusual. Jesus talks about how a seed grows into a tree. Even today we don't know too much about this common "mystery." Tremendous power releases into nature as nitrogen takes on the garment of green. If God let it go at once, it would make a hydrogen bomb sound like a firecracker. This is a parable of action and power that the Word has in our hearts and lives.

JESUS STILLS THE STORM (4:35-41)

About this time, Jesus wraps up His teaching, and He and the disciples go out to sea. Jesus is tired and goes to sleep in the front of the boat. While they sail north, a storm blows in with wind and waves so high it threatens to sink the boat. These experienced fishermen wake Jesus and say, "Don't you care that we will drown?"

Jesus got up, spoke to the wind and the sea, "Peace, be still." And immediately, there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?"

And the men were even more afraid. Not so much by the fact that Jesus quieted the storm, but the way He did it. It had just leveled out in a sudden calm. This miracle was so great it made these men afraid.

Do you see what a wonderful thing it is? Jesus puts us in the storms of life so that we will come closer to Him, so we can know Him better.

THREE SIGNIFICANT MIRACLES (5:2_B-13)

Mark 5 records three outstanding miracles that only could be performed by an omnipotent hand. Each illustrate Jesus' power.

JESUS' POWER OVER DEMONS

The first illustrates Jesus' power over demons, which were especially active in Galilee at the time of Jesus' ministry. When the Lord had taught for days and still the people followed Him, He and His disciples crossed the sea, hoping to take a rest. It was the land given to the tribe of Gad who decided to stay on the east side of the Jordan River, and now they were Jews in the pig business. (Note: When you walk away from God, sometimes you just keep going.)

When Jesus and His men got out of the boat, they were met by “a man” controlled by demons. He was a crazed, desperate maniac. Yet in spite of his condition, Jesus saw the man.

The man lived among the tombs. He no longer enjoyed the society of normal people but lived among the dead. Because of the demonic control, the man had superhuman strength, so they could not chain him. He was a wild, miserable man, a creature of hopeless pathos and pity. He’s inarticulate and just cries out.

Yet when the man saw Jesus, he ran and worshipped Him. Even when he battled the demon inside him, the man feared Jesus. He had a case of spiritual schizophrenia, a split personality—sometimes the man spoke and sometimes the demon talked to Jesus.

Jesus asked the man’s name and the demons replied, “Legion; for we are many.”

The demons pleaded with Jesus not to send them into the abyss but asked instead to be sent into the pigs grazing on the hillside. Jesus agreed and sent the demons into the more than 2,000 pigs who then ran down the slope and into the lake.

Here’s what we can learn about demon possession from this scene:

1. The Bible teaches that demons exist. They are real.
2. Demons were especially active during Jesus’ ministry on earth.
3. For some strange reason demons have a restlessness of seeking to express their evil nature through people. Good spirits never seek to take possession of men. The Holy Spirit is the one exception, and He only indwells believers. But as truly as He indwells believers, so demons can possess the unsaved. Demons cannot possess the saved. (Read 1 John 4:4.) Therefore, a child of God cannot be demon-possessed.
4. Demons are not devils. There is only one Devil. They are called “unclean spirits” because of their nature.
5. Scripture does not tell us the origin of demons. They are under Satan’s control and it would stand to reason that when Satan fell, the angels that followed him became demons.
6. Their purpose is to fulfill Satan’s program and man’s final undoing.
7. The greatest lesson is that Jesus has power over demons. They can be cast out in His name. The believer should not fear demons but grow in faith in the power and authority of our Lord Jesus.

JESUS' POWER OVER DISEASE (5:21-34)

Because all of Galilee knew of Jesus' miracle-working ministry, crowds came to Him with their need. When Jesus was on His way to help the daughter of a man named Jairus, He was making His way through a throng when He stopped and said, "Who touched me?"

It was a woman who had touched the edge of Jesus' coat, from behind, as Jesus walked through the crowd.

The disciples answered Jesus, "Who touched You? The whole crowd is here to touch You!" But Jesus knew only one touched Him in faith for healing. And He brought the woman's 12 years of suffering to an end.

JESUS' POWER OVER DEATH (5:35-40)

And next we see that Jairus' 12-year-old daughter entered from light into the darkness of death. While Jesus talked with the sick woman in the crowd, Jairus must have wanted to urge Him along. *"Doesn't He know that my little girl is so sick at home? And that she'll die unless He moves?"*

The Lord purposefully did not move. He stopped and healed the sick woman. While this was happening, Jairus' servant came from his home and whispered to him, "The little girl is dead." But Jesus said, "Only believe."

Only then did Jesus go to Jairus' home. Some there didn't believe, and He had them put out. Then He went to the room where the dead little girl lay. He took her by the hand and said in Aramaic, *"Talitha cumi."* She would have recognized the expression spoken in her heart language, "Little Lamb, wake up." And at this sweet and lovely word demonstrating His power, the warmth returned to her cheeks and she opened her eyes.

These three great miracles demonstrate the great message of the Gospel of Mark: Jesus is God's servant with God's power. He's a man of action, and He's come not to be ministered to but to give His life a ransom for many.

**NEXT: Discover there are always two groups:
Those who trust Jesus Christ and those who reject Him.**

If your heart and eyes are open
AND YOU WANT TO KNOW,
THEN THE *the Spirit of God*
WILL MAKE *great truth*
real to your heart.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

WHO DO YOU THINK JESUS IS?



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 6–7**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 6** and **Mark 7**

In our journey with Mark through Jesus' ministry, we now see Jesus, busy as always, interacting with people in the northern country. These are the packed days at the peak of Jesus' ministry.

As we follow Jesus, we arrive in Nazareth. Jesus returned to His hometown several times, even though they had rejected Him as Messiah. Because of that, He had moved His headquarters to Capernaum, but He returned to visit because He wanted to reach His hometown people with the gospel.

As a good Jew, it was the Lord's custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day wherever He was. He both needed to worship God, and it was the place to reach the most people. His words, His works, and His wonders all amazed the people who knew Him. His teaching prompted their questions. But they didn't believe Nazareth could produce anyone like Jesus. They couldn't put their trust in one of their own, because they had no faith in themselves. *They had seen Him grow up—how could He be the Messiah?*

In Nazareth, we also meet Mary's other children—Jesus' half-brothers and sisters. Jesus' siblings thought they knew Him, but they didn't. They felt *scandalized* by His claims.

All this rejection saddened Jesus. He marveled at people's unbelief. In fact, their lack of faith kept Him from doing any major work in their town. Even today, faith in Jesus is the one requirement to release the power of God in salvation. Unbelief shuts off omnipotence—it insulates and isolates the power of God.

But that didn't keep Jesus from continuing to teach. He traveled and taught and healed people throughout the villages in the northern areas of Israel. This was His home country.

Next, Jesus organized His disciples and sent them out two by two, equipped with the message of repentance, the same as He had taught. He also equipped them with the power over unclean spirits, the highest power they could exercise. He told them to travel light to show how urgent and time-sensitive this mission was. They were to be completely dependent on God for their provision and to specifically seek out one audience: “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” When people rejected their message, they were to leave town and “shake off the dust from their feet” as a picture.

The disciples took a serious and solemn trip. Light creates responsibility. To reject the grace of God invited His judgment. The same is still true today.

And so the disciples went out, each with a partner. When local people heard these disciples followed Jesus, the disciples were celebrities. They preached a message of repentance, and their miracles proved their message was from God. Today we're told to believe—with our repentance we need also to turn from our sin to God.

Speaking of repentance, the people remembered this as John the Baptist's message—especially King Herod, who had murdered John sometime before.

When Herod heard about Jesus' popularity and His mighty works, he thought Jesus was John the Baptist, risen from the dead. His strange and superstitious reaction overtook him. Herod was in awe of John. Convinced he was a holy man, Herod gave him special treatment. Whenever he listened to him, he was miserable with guilt—and yet he couldn't stay away; something about John kept him coming back.

John courageously denounced sin in high places. He called out Herod for adultery when Herod took his brother's wife for himself. This enraged his wife, Herodius, who then plotted to kill John.

When the opportunity presented itself, Herodius put her plan into action. Herod threw a birthday party and invited all the VIPs in Galilee. Herodius told her daughter to dance for the guests—because she knew what a lustful, shameless old man he was. And it worked—Herod rewarded the daughter, telling her she could ask anything she wanted. Prompted by her mother, the girl asked for John the Baptist’s head on a platter.

That sobered Herod up fast. Afraid of what his friends might think and say, he gave her her wish and committed cold-blooded murder. Just like that, John the Baptist’s life was complete. When John’s disciples heard about this, they got his body and gave it a decent burial.

COME REST A WHILE

When the disciples returned to Jesus, full of stories of what had happened on their ministry trips, Jesus wanted to hear all about it. *“But first you must get some rest and refreshment,”* He said.

Jesus knew what a toll it takes to be forever busy and dealing with constant demands. He wanted to get away to a quiet place and rest—and let His apostles see how to do it. So, they got in a boat and headed across the lake.

But they couldn’t escape the crowd, who had watched them sail and ran around the shore of the Sea of Galilee to meet Jesus and the disciples when they landed on the other side.

Just when you’d think Jesus would be frustrated or mad, instead when He saw them it was with compassion. All people are sheep to Him. He alone is the true Shepherd. He first met their spiritual needs by teaching them. Then He met their physical needs by feeding them.

FIVE THOUSAND FED (6:35-37)

In addition to helping the people who sat under Him as teacher, Jesus saw this as an opportunity to teach the disciples. He told them to do something impossible, “The people are hungry—feed them.” The disciples had to learn, as we do too, that Jesus always commands the impossible. The reason is obvious—He intends to do the work.

The disciples only had a little boy’s lunch to work with—something like hamburger buns and two small fishes. Jesus directed the people to sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds. Then He thanked His Father in heaven and kept passing the disciples the food—enough for everyone to be fed and for 12 baskets left over.

This is a miracle. The Creator who made the fish at the beginning and caused the grain to multiply in the field, now by His word created a filling meal for the crowd. This may have been the first time many in this crowd ever felt full.

After the miracle, Jesus sent the people home and told the disciples to get in the boat, cross over the northern end of the lake, and to meet Him in Bethsaida. Jesus wanted some time alone to pray.

What should have taken them no time at all took the disciples hours to cross the lake. A wind had kicked up, and they fought the waves all night. Those men in the boat mingled their sweat with the waves whose salt water was breaking over their little boat. They strained at the oars and thought for sure they were going to sink.

Now in the fourth watch (after 3 A.M.), Jesus saw them working hard, rowing against the storm, so He went out to them, walking on the water.

Read that again. *He saw them rowing and walked out to them.* Think about that—especially if you're in a hard spot right now. Do you feel like you're sitting alone in a corner of darkness? Are you facing temptations and problems too great to bear? Do you feel like you're out on a stormy sea and your boat is about to go under?

Here is some good news for you, Christian. *He saw them rowing against the storm ...* Just as He sees you today. He knows your problems. You don't have to send up a flare to alert Him. He already knows. In times of darkness, commit your way to Him in this very specific way.

What happened to the frightened disciples? He got in the boat with them and they were “amazed in themselves beyond measure.”

When they got to land, the crowds were waiting for Jesus. People had brought their sick family and friends on stretchers for Jesus to heal. Everywhere He went, people begged for His help. They reached out to touch Him, even grabbed at His clothes. Whoever He touched was healed. Today we can't even picture the number of sick people He healed. He was the real deal, and His healing was real. That's why no one—not even Jesus' enemies—ever denied He performed healing miracles.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS DEFINED

This is a good moment to step back and really look at Jesus. The Lord Jesus is God's Servant, doing God's will. He is a man of action, getting a job done. He is our Savior, who came to save. He is the only One who can.

In Jesus' day, many religious groups had formed during the time between the Old and New Testaments. They each interacted with Jesus on a unique level.

The Scribes—This group, founded by the prophet Ezra, had a good beginning. They taught and interpreted the Law. Sadly, this noble job had gone to their heads and they became “hair-splitters,” more concerned with the *letter* of the Law than with God's *spirit* in the Law.

Pharisees—In their early days, this courageous group defended the Jewish way of life against all foreign influences. They loved and believed in the Old Testament, and were political nationalists. They wanted to bring in the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven (or the Kingdom of God) to the earth.

Sadducees—This group was sad indeed. They were wealthy and socially-minded, with no spiritual depth. They were secular to the core, and wanted nothing to do with the supernatural.

Herodians—As their name suggests, this group were political opportunists, fighting to keep the herods on the throne. This motley crew all worked against Jesus.

WHICH GROUP ARE YOU IN?

As we look at what Jesus was busy doing in Galilee (teaching, healing, raising the dead), we shouldn't forget the crisis that was stirring behind the scenes. These religious leaders tried to figure out who Jesus is.

Our Lord has made such an impression on people that several Pharisees and scribes traveled all the way from Jerusalem (around 100 miles) to spy on Jesus. Brace yourselves—there's bound to be a confrontation between the Lord Jesus and His followers and the Pharisees and their followers. One group is made up of Jesus' friends and followers who love Him. The second group is comprised of Jesus' enemies who want to destroy Him.

It has always been this way. There are two groups: Those who trust Him and those who reject Him. Which group are you in? The question is not whether you are a member of a church or have been through some ceremony; rather the all-important question is what is your relationship to Jesus Christ?

This special delegation from Jerusalem were intellectual opponents sent to trap the Lord Jesus. Of course, it wasn't difficult for them to find some fault, because the Lord Jesus entirely ignored their traditions. They lodged their accusation against His disciples, but they really accused Jesus personally. Jesus' defense of His disciples, delivered with deliberate intent, was first to call them hypocrites. *"You're just actors on a stage—going through a religious ritual without any heart at all."*

We all know hypocrites and, likely, we've all been hypocrites, making ourselves look religious. To be genuine, our hearts must be engaged. The Pharisees followed a law without their hearts. They substituted man's traditions for the Word of God. Their worship was empty. Like too many churches today, they replaced the Word of God with their own words and thoughts and rituals. God promises no power unless His Word is central.

Jesus then goes into detail on how they had substituted the external rules for that which is internal. He pointed out what is real. The way that our Lord defended Himself is a clear proof of His deity. On another day, one of His enemies said, *"We've never heard anyone speak like this man"* (see John 7:46).

The Pharisees went on their way, licking their wounds, and the disciples pulled Jesus aside and asked Him to explain more. *"It's what comes out of a man's heart that defiles him,"* Jesus answered.

You don't have to go any further than today's news cycle to see: evil thoughts; unlawful sex; murder; thefts; covetousness—grasping and greediness for things and positions; wickedness—all the acts intended to hurt people; the pretenses people put up; lasciviousness—sensuality; envy; slander against God or man; pride (God hates this above all else); foolishness—acts done without any respect for God or man. These all come out of our hearts.

This is why the Lord Jesus tells us, *"You must be born again."*

BELIEVE IN HIM TODAY

All of Jesus' interactions gave people the opportunity to believe in Him as their Savior. He demonstrated this again to His disciples on a trip they took north. When they stepped out of Israel, a Greek woman ran to Jesus in faith. They were outraged by her boldness, but Jesus answered her request. When they traveled through the Decapolis, Jesus miraculously healed a man born

deaf and unable to speak. He put His fingers in the man's ears and some spit on the man's tongue, prayed to His Father and said, "*Open up!*" And the man's hearing was clear and his speech plain—just like that.

Everything He did was done to help people believe in Him. The man's ears were opened so he could hear the good news of Jesus Christ. But Jesus asked people to keep this all quiet even when they were beside themselves with excitement. This miracle stirred a great momentum in Jesus' ministry, which had already broken all bounds.

The pressure Jesus faced in these days was humanly unbearable. He shouldered the burdens of the crowds, the tensions of the times, the long busy days, the weakness of the body. This crowd summed it up well, "*Jesus has done it all and done it well.*" We can add our word of agreement to this and say a hearty amen.

Friend, He still does all things well today.

**NEXT: Meet Jesus on a mountaintop
for an amazing blast from the past.**

LESSON 4



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. In all of Jesus' busyness in Galilee, the northern area of Israel, what events stand out to you?

2. What does Jesus teach us about rest?

3. *"He saw them rowing and walked out to them."* Think about that—especially if you're in a hard spot right now. Do you feel like you're sitting alone in a corner of darkness? Are you facing temptations and problems too great to bear? Do you feel like you're out on a stormy sea and your boat is about to go under?

What encouragement can you take to heart from this narrative account on the stormy sea?

LESSON 5

JESUS ONLY



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 8–9**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 8** and **Mark 9**

Is the Lord Jesus able to save us completely—for eternity? Can He do the job? Yes, He's able to do the job as we'll see Him now as God's servant.

As we follow Jesus around the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, keep in mind it's six months before He goes to the Cross for us.

Jesus was still attracting thousands of people—not all His followers, but His critics and some only hoping to see miracles.

Just a few weeks before, Jesus fed thousands of people on a hillside with nothing but a boy's lunch. Now here we are in the Decapolis (Gentile cities), with an engaged crowd listening to Jesus teach for three days. Jesus had compassion on them, knowing many had come far. *"What food do we have to feed them?"* He asked the disciples. They gave him seven loaves and a few small fish. Jesus thanked His Father for the food and distributed it to the disciples who then fed the people. That day, if every man brought a wife and one child, Jesus fed more than 12,000 people and sent them home full.

Did the disciples not have déjà vu? Had they forgotten what Jesus had done on another hillside a few weeks ago?

Before we're too hard on them, don't we often have the same experience?

God does something very gracious and good for us, and we soon forget it. When a new emergency arises, we find the crisis brand new to us again. Let's learn from the disciples' experience here.

LEAVEN EXPLAINED

When Jesus and His men landed on the west shore of Galilee, the Pharisees, those bloodhounds of hate, are on His trail again. They came to try to trick Him into saying something they could attack. Jesus sighed in His spirit and wouldn't play their game. He got His men back in the boat and they sailed back to the other side of the lake.

Ironically, the disciples hadn't brought food with them—they only had one small loaf of bread. (Apparently they still don't remember what Jesus did with one boy's small lunch.) Jesus used this one loaf as an illustration, still thinking about the Pharisees they left on the shore. He warned the disciples, "Careful—beware of the yeast that contaminates the Pharisee's bread and those who follow Herod."

Whenever leaven (or yeast) is mentioned in the Bible, it represents wrong or evil teaching. When bread is made, leaven is added to make it taste good. Today we have a lot of "Bible" teaching that tries to make God's Word "taste good"—even to those who don't know the Lord. They mix wrong teaching with the truth of the gospel—just like the Pharisees.

The Word of God is the Bread of Life because the Word of God reveals Jesus. Fill yourself up on the truth of God's Word and be on your guard to recognize false teaching.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN

We read several times in the Gospels about when Jesus opened the eyes of the blind. Each time, He used a different method. When He healed blind Bartimaeus, Jesus spoke the miracle from a distance. Another time, Jesus told a man born blind to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam and he was healed.

Now in Mark 8, Jesus is in Bethsaida, a town that had seen many miracles. A crowd brought a blind man for Jesus to heal. First, Jesus spit on this man's eyes and covered them with His hand. The man could see light and images. Then Jesus covered them again, and the man could see perfectly.

The spiritual lesson we can learn here begins when we admit that, “Once I was blind, but now I can see.” When Jesus saves us, we regain partial sight. Even today we only see through a glass darkly—we can’t understand many things. But someday when we come into Jesus’ presence, we’ll get our 20/20 spiritual vision. That’s when our vision will be complete. When the Lord finished with this blind man, He had healed him perfectly. Someday that will be our story, too.

WHO IS JESUS?

Now that the disciples had fully engaged with Jesus’ ministry, Jesus thought it time to reveal future plans to them; He wanted to reveal His real identity to them. But first, He took them on a retreat far away from crowds, to Caesarea Philippi, 25 miles north of Galilee. There He asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”

“Some say you’re John the Baptist, others say Elijah or some other prophet.” Clearly, people were confused, not really knowing who Jesus was. Most thought highly of Him—but fell short of who He really is.

Jesus then asked His men, “Who do you say I am?” And that, friends, is the question you must answer. *Who do you think He is?* To be united to Him, joined to Him as your Savior, is the important thing. Are you enjoying a right relationship with Jesus Christ?

Peter gave the answer for all of us: “You are the Christ, the Messiah.” This is the finest thing he ever said.

Jesus is His name. *Christ* is a title, translated in Hebrew as the *Messiah*, the “Anointed One.” This title, Jesus Christ, gathers up all the rich meaning of the Old Testament. Jesus came to reveal God in the flesh. (A few of the many Old Testament references about Messiah include: Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 2:2; 45:6-7; and Malachi 3:1.)

Jesus praised Peter and His men for believing the truth about Him but told them to wait until the gospel story was complete before they talked about it. “*Between then and now, there will be the Cross,*” He said. “*I will suffer in coming days—and then I will die. But three days later, I will rise again.*”

Note: Jesus only revealed Himself to be Messiah as He explained His purpose of redemption. Our salvation depends on who He is and what He did.

This was the first time the disciples heard about the Cross, and they were unprepared for it. Again, Peter stepped up and protested. “*Never, Jesus!*” (This is the worst thing Peter ever said.) But Jesus knew where it was coming from—the enemy of our soul. He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan!” Satan denies the value of Jesus’ death.

The Lord, strong on truth but tender towards His followers, then describes what a life of His true disciples will look like. A disciple will deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him. We don’t do this *to be saved*, but *because we are saved*.

Do you acknowledge Him as Lord today? Do you serve Him and want to glorify Him? Ask yourself this important question.

GLORY ON THE MOUNTAIN

Usually briefer than the other Gospels in describing overlapping events, Mark gives the longest account of the Transfiguration. Perhaps because Peter was there on the mountain with Jesus Christ on this day, we see Jesus in His perfect picture of humanity.

Peter says later: “We ... were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Peter says they were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ majesty. John says, “... we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). This is the glorified Christ as He will come someday to this earth. This also is a picture of what you and I will be someday when we shall be like Him (see 1 John 3:2).

Mark says Jesus “was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (9:3). The word *transfigured* means “to change completely in form or nature.” Jesus’ body changed from the inside out. The Transfiguration was the light that shone from within; perhaps Adam and Eve were clothed like this. The Transfiguration shows us, not the deity, but the perfect humanity of Jesus.

On the mountaintop with Jesus appeared Elijah and Moses—the same as we read about in the Old Testament. Elijah represented the prophets and Moses represented the Law. We are told that both the Law and the prophets bore

testimony of the death of Jesus. Moses knew of Jesus, even in his own time, because Hebrews 11:26 says Moses valued suffering in the Messiah's camp far greater than Egyptian wealth because he was looking ahead, anticipating the payoff. By faith, Moses turned his back on Egypt, and had his eye on the One no eye can see. And now there he stood with Jesus.

All the prophets spoke of Jesus' suffering and the glory that will follow, too.

As they stood there together—Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, with the three disciples looking on—a cloud overshadowed them and they heard a voice say, “This is my beloved Son. Hear him” (9:7).

All attention now is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. His Word is final.

And then a moment later, the disciples saw Jesus only with themselves. (By the way, with “Jesus only” is a marvelous place to be, isn't it? Not only for the disciples, but for us today. In a brief way, we read such great and weighty words—Jesus only!)

When they came down from the mountain, Jesus said the disciples shouldn't talk about what they saw that day until after He had risen from the dead. This story—and its goal—only makes sense when it is told with Jesus' death and resurrection (which Jesus always talked about together).

The disciples were confused about the resurrection. They never grasped it. Even when they rushed to the cemetery after Jesus' death, they did not expect to see a living Savior. They still had so much to believe.

This day on the mountain was a turning point for Jesus. Now He turned and began to move directly toward Jerusalem and the Cross.

JESUS HEALS A DEMON-POSSESSED BOY

Down from the mountain top, Jesus and His men join the other disciples who were experiencing total defeat in the foothills. A crowd, including religious scribes, had gathered around the disciples. A man had brought his son to the disciples and asked for help. The boy was possessed by demons, but the disciples could do nothing to relieve the torture.

When Jesus showed up, the crowd ran to Him. *“Please help!”* Jesus told them to bring Him the boy. Isn't that always our goal? Get our loved ones to Jesus!

When the demon in the boy saw Jesus, it threw him into a seizure, foaming at the mouth and writhing on the ground. The father knelt at Jesus' feet for his tortured son. *"Please, help him!"* As usual, Jesus was more than willing.

First, He turned to the father and asked him to believe. All things are possible to him who believes. The father's honesty touches us all. He said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)!

Jesus then took control of the situation; He rebuked the demon, called him out of the boy, and told it never to return to him. The foul spirit screamed and obeyed. Jesus then helped the boy to his feet. The disciples asked Jesus later why they couldn't help the boy, and Jesus said some things only can come through prayer.

After this they headed south, through Galilee. While Jesus talked about His coming death and resurrection, the disciples argued among themselves about who of them would be the greatest in the kingdom.

MARK OF GREATNESS

Later when they got to Capernaum, Jesus asked the disciples what they were talking about on the road. When they sat quiet, Jesus said, *"If you want to be the greatest, then be the servant of all."*

When He explained this spiritual principle of greatness, He took a child in His arms and said, *"Whoever embraces one of these children as I do, embraces me, and far more than me—God who sent me."*

Jesus also addressed the disciples' objection about others who were working "in Jesus' name." Jesus rebukes any kind of divisive spirit but calls for unity when something good is done "in My name."

In these refining conversations, He also talked about hell, about sin, and how the cleansing work of the Word of God working within us sanctifies and brings peace.

NEXT: Walk with Jesus towards Jerusalem.

4. The father of the boy controlled by a demon admitted an honest reality for all of us. He said, *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”*
How do you relate to this?

LESSON 6

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 10–11**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 10** and **Mark 11**

As Jesus begins His final journey to Jerusalem, the Pharisees, those bloodhounds of hate, are on His trail. They pose tricky questions like, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” (10:2).

The Pharisees didn’t ask Jesus about divorce because they wanted an answer; they want to trap Him. It’s a clever question and was a hot issue of the day because their king, Herod, had just divorced his wife in order to marry his brother Philip’s wife. John the Baptist spoke out against it and Herod beheaded him.

The trap was this: If Jesus answered “no” to their question, He would have contradicted Moses and been brought into conflict with Herod.

If Jesus said “yes,” He would be accused of being lax in His teaching.

But as always, Jesus’ debate method was a good one. He countered their question with a question. “What did Moses command you?” (in Deuteronomy 24:1-2). Everyone understood Moses permitted divorce, but it was never to be over some petty issue, as it had evolved into in that day.

To answer them, the Lord goes back to basics, and turns the discussion from divorce back to marriage. Jesus begins with the reason God permitted divorce—then as now, God granted divorce because of sin.

Jesus takes them back to God's ideal for marriage at creation, before sin entered the world. Divorce was never in His plan—He had something better for us. In this same line of thinking, murder was also never in His plan, but murderers can be forgiven. Divorce is a sin, but divorced people can be forgiven. Under certain circumstances, the Bible teaches that divorced people can remarry. We act almost as if divorce is the unpardonable sin. But people who are saved after securing a divorce ought not to bear the stigma any more than any other sinner who has been saved. We are all sinners saved by grace.

Marriage is something God makes. God joins a couple together, like He did at creation. Any violation of this is sin. Too often, the basic problem is marrying the wrong person. If you're a Christian, marriage is something God wants to arrange for you, if you will let Him. The only grounds for divorce that Scripture recognizes is unfaithfulness. The innocent party is free to marry again.

As Jesus and the Pharisees talked, the discussion turned from divorce to children. Children are the innocent product of marriage, and divorce becomes doubly evil because children suffer when their home is destroyed.

As the discussion continued, young children were brought to Jesus, but the disciples shooed them away. But Jesus welcomed the children, even taking them in His arms and blessing them.

The children would not have to become adults to come to Him. Jesus says He wishes adults would become like little children and trust Him with simple, childlike faith.

RICH YOUNG RULER MEETS JESUS

As Jesus continued toward Jerusalem, a young man ran to Him and asked, *“Good Master, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life?”*

Under the Mosaic system, his question was legitimate, but Jesus wants the young man to think. Why should he call Jesus *good*? There is only One who is good, and that is God. If he is calling Jesus good, then Jesus is God.

Jesus then rehearses the Ten Commandments with him. The first half of the commandments are about man's relationship to God. The second section has to do with man's relationship with man—that is where Jesus focused first. The young man could meet all those standards.

But Jesus told him he lacked one thing: A relationship to God. Jesus asked him to separate himself from his riches and follow Him. If he had followed the Lord Jesus, he would have learned that the reason Jesus is good is because Jesus is God. If He had followed Jesus, where would this have led him? In a few short days, the Lord Jesus is on His way to die for the sins of this man. Had he followed Jesus, he would have come to the Cross for salvation. But the young man sadly went away, grieved and unwilling to part with his riches.

Money will buy anything except the most valuable thing—eternal life. This rich man couldn't buy his way to heaven. It is impossible for anyone to enter heaven their own way. As impossible, Jesus said, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

But for God all things are possible. Jesus invited this young man to get rid of what stood between him and God. Just as He offers us the same invitation; don't let anything stand in the way between you and the Lord.

Peter, one of the disciples, heard this discussion and asked Jesus, *"What about those of us who left everything to follow You?"* Instead of rebuking Peter, Jesus promised a reward for those who sacrifice for Him. In a complete reversal from how the world thinks—Jesus said with God's rewards *the first will be last and the last will be first.*

As Jesus and His disciples move closer to Jerusalem, Jesus tells them all that waits ahead—that the chief priests and scribes will condemn Him to death, He'll be scourged and mocked, then killed, and on the third day He will rise again. But no matter how clearly He said it, it didn't sink in for the disciples. In fact, the disciples James and John approached Him with a favor.

"Someday in glory, would You award us the highest places of honor—one seated at your right, the other at your left?"

Jesus said, *"You have no idea what you're asking."* To sit with Him in glory means they would suffer with Him here. (The other ten disciples didn't appreciate the brothers' bold request. They wanted the best positions for themselves.)

But Jesus said the places of honor were not His to reward. Those who will receive it are preparing themselves for that place. Friend, you get heaven as a gift. But your place in heaven—you work for that. Salvation is free, but we work for a reward. If you want to be rewarded in heaven, you must work for it—but it may not be like you think. Jesus said whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Humble yourself and serve—that’s God’s way. That is what Jesus Himself was doing. He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away His life.

JESUS HEALS BARTIMAEUS

As they came to Jericho, about 20 miles from Jerusalem, a blind man sitting by the road heard that Jesus was coming. He cried out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” (10:47). People couldn’t shut him up. When Jesus heard Him, He stopped and asked Bartimaeus, “*What can I do for you?*”

Bartimaeus said, “*Rabbi, I want to see.*”

And just as quick as that, Jesus said, “*Your faith has saved and healed you.*” And He restored his sight. It is thrilling to think how Bartimaeus followed Jesus now with his eyes open. In a few days he will see Jesus dying on the Cross.

JESUS GETS TO JERUSALEM

Jesus is now moving toward Jerusalem, both geographically *and* chronologically closer to His death. This is the last week of His earthly life. As they approach Bethany and Bethphage, two towns over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus directs two of His men to go into town, find a young colt on which no one has ever ridden, and bring the colt to Him. If anyone asks, He said, tell them “the Lord needs it.” (See Mark 11:2-3.)

The Lord had likely arranged this earlier. This is one of the first times Jesus asserts His authority. While some people are plotting Jesus’ death, others are yielding allegiance to Him and obeyed Him. You can find these two classes of people even today.

So, the disciples followed Jesus’ instructions, returned with the colt, and covered it with their coats. Then, in the tradition of welcoming victorious leaders home from battle, they cut down palm branches and carpeted the road with them. A small crowd of Galileans gathered and began to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Mark 11:7-9).

To anyone who had witnessed the Caesars returning home to Rome from a victorious campaign, this gathering of peasants would have been unimpressive. In Rome, the parade of plunder and captives went on for days.

But the impressive thing about Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is that He offered Himself to them publicly and demanded a decision from them. He came into the city on the Sabbath, offering Himself as the Great High Priest to offer the sacrifice that alone is acceptable to God for our sins.

Instead of this being a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was rejected. But just wait until you see Him someday when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. That will be the real triumphal entry. Everyone who trusts Him as Savior for more than two thousand years—millions of saints—will join that tremendous crowd. He will lead His new creations to their new home in a New Jerusalem. Now *that* will be triumphant!

ON SUNDAY

The next day Jesus and His disciples came over the hill from Bethany. He was hungry, so He looked for fruit on a fig tree, but there wasn't any so He cursed the tree. Even in this, Jesus taught a great spiritual lesson.

The nation Israel is like the fig tree. They had the outward leaves of a God-given religion, but there was no spiritual fruit. The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, said in Isaiah 29:13, "these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men."

The next day when Jesus and His team passed by the fig tree, they noticed that the tree had withered away.

Later that Sunday, Jesus went into the temple and threw out everyone who was price-gouging the crowds who had come to worship. He tossed the moneychangers' tables and the seats of those who sold high-priced doves. These vendors served a good purpose, but the Lord called the place a den of thieves. It had become a religious racket.

ON MONDAY

On their walk into Jerusalem when Peter called out the withered fig tree, Jesus answered him saying, “Have faith in God” (11:22), then went on to teach them about how to pray.

The first step in prayer must be faith in God. Hebrews 11:6 tells us it is impossible to please God without faith. If you don’t believe in God, the skeptic is correct when he says prayer is a madman talking to himself.

“Faith moves mountains,” Jesus says. This is a visible illustration to show what prayer can do. The Christian does not need to throw mountains around literally, but he needs power for living and meeting the daily mountains of cares and problems. This is why the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). Being strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man is greater than moving a mountain any day.

Have faith in God. Pray, believing God will answer you. This does not give you the ability to satisfy your own selfish desires, but believe that God’s will might be done in your life.

But in order for your prayer to be heard and answered, you must forgive. This is so important to grasp. An unforgiving spirit short-circuits the power of your prayer. If you want power in your life, you must forgive.

JESUS’ AUTHORITY QUESTIONED

Jesus loves sincere questions. He also knows our hearts and can discern the motive behind the questions. When He was walking again in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders are still on His trail. They resist Him at every turn. They challenge His authority. Since they considered themselves the official representatives of religion in their day, and they had given no authority to Him, *where did He get it?*

Jesus answered their question with a question. “The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?” (11:29-30).

That was a good question and they were stumped. If they said John’s baptism was from heaven, then the obvious follow-up would be, “Then why didn’t you accept it?” If they renounced John, then the people would be upset, because they accepted John as a prophet.

They wiggled out of answering Jesus' question by saying they didn't know. They had no intention of following His teaching even if He had told them. Jesus doesn't answer their question because He knew it was a trap. The way Jesus handled His enemies proves over and over again that He is God.

When men and women come to the Lord with sincere questions as sincere seekers, He always gives a sincere and genuine answer.

**NEXT: Jesus gives us a glimpse of the coming
Tribulation and His dramatic second coming.**



WHEN WE COME
TO THE LORD WITH
*sincere questions as
sincere seekers,*
HE ALWAYS GIVES A
*sincere and
genuine answer.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 7

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 12–13**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 12** and **Mark 13**

The Gospel of Mark is one of action, but today you might think that action has paused—but it's actually the calm before the storm. The fiercest encounter with the religious rulers is building. Both sides bring up their heavy artillery and prepare for the battle of heaven and hell, night and darkness, God and Satan. War is stirring.

For three years, Jesus and the religious rulers have engaged in periodic verbal skirmishes. Jesus takes the initiative, then they try to trap Him with loaded questions hoping people turn against Him. But then Jesus always wins a victory.

Jesus brings this strategy to its height with the most pointed, plain, and direct parable of His ministry—the vineyard. He tells them of a man who planted a vineyard and then went to a far country.

He gave them a God-given religion—the only people who ever had the visible presence of God.

In the parable, from a distance, the man sent a servant to collect some fruit. But they beat him up and sent him away empty-handed. Repeatedly, he sent other servants and they beat and shamed them, killing some. Finally, he sent his son, thinking they would honor him. Instead, they killed him, too. What should the lord of the vineyard do?

The religious leaders understood what Jesus implied in the parable, and it enraged them. The “certain man” who had the vineyard is God the Father. The vineyard is the nation Israel. God had chosen and protected this nation. The servants sent were the prophets. The husbandmen were the religious rulers. Finally, He sent His Son; and that, of course, is the Lord Jesus.

The Lord delivers a deliberate and direct thrust at the religious rulers. He knew they had plotted His death and now He brings their plans out into the light. He prophesies their every step and anticipates their next move. He charges them with murder before they kill Him. Then He predicts their judgment.

The religious rulers would have captured and executed the Lord Jesus on the spot, but they were afraid of the crowds. This parable of the vineyard set off a verbal war, so next they sent further delegations to trap Him with questions.

WHAT ABOUT TAXES?

“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” Their question is a masterpiece, but He knew they were trying to trick Him. They flattered Him, but He called them hypocrites.

He asked them for a penny. (Perhaps He didn't have one Himself.) *“Whose image is on the coin?”*

“Caesar's,” they said.

“Give Caesar what is his, and give God what is His.” (See 12:13-17.)

Their mouths hung open, speechless. Jesus had brilliantly flipped their question. If He had said they should pay taxes to Caesar, He would have put Caesar ahead of Moses. But if He said they were not to pay taxes, He would have been guilty of rebellion against Caesar. They thought they had Him in a trap, but they didn't have Him at all.

Jesus' answer reveals that as children of God, we are responsible to pay our taxes to our government. We also have a responsibility to our loved ones, and to our church. Just as the coin has two sides, we all have our responsibilities, both on earth and in heaven. Even as citizens of heaven, we pay taxes down here. And pilgrims down here should deposit eternal wealth in heaven. We are responsible before God to do both.

Next, the Sadducees came to drill Jesus. These were the liberals of the day. They denied the supernatural, but they knew what Scripture said. Their question was a ridiculous scenario drawn from the kinsmen redeemer principle in the book of Ruth. If a woman's husband died and his brother married her and then also died—whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

Jesus pointed out their two errors in the question: They did not know the Scriptures and they did not know the power of God.

This was just another example of their attempt to trick Jesus, but He would have none of it.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT?

A scribe then asked Jesus, *"What is the most important commandment?"* Jesus answers quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5, *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* ... And the second, like it, is this: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these" (12:30-31).

This commandment is for us, too. If you say you obey God and don't need Jesus Christ as a Savior, then the question is, do you love God as you should—with all your heart and mind and soul? If you don't, then you are breaking His commandment and you need a Savior. Do you love others like you should? Until you do, you need a Savior.

Jesus affirmed what the scribe said—to love God and others is better than all the offerings and sacrifices put together.

Now this ended their questions. The enemy could not trap Him. Now Jesus is going to do the questioning.

As Jesus taught in the temple, His audience were the scribes, the men who devoted their lives to understanding the Scriptures. He asked them, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?” Jesus then quotes Psalm 110, asking how David could call his own great-great-great-great-grandson his Lord. The only way is for the Lord to be more than David’s son. He must be virgin-born to be the Son of God. The Lord is teaching the temple crowd about Himself.

Privilege creates responsibility. He denounces the scribes because their lives contradicted the Scriptures they taught. Their judgment will be more severe than those who have not heard the Scriptures.

SOMETHING ONLY GOD SHOULD DO

While He was in the temple, Jesus did an audacious thing only God should do. He watched how people gave to God.

Today, Jesus has the authority to watch while the offering plate is passed in your church or whenever you are asked to give to God’s work. But note, He doesn’t watch what you give. He watches how much you keep for yourself.

On this day in the temple, Jesus watched a poor woman give two mites—called “crumbs.” He also saw the rich give generously, but didn’t commend that. Instead He praised the widow. Why? Because He saw that she kept nothing for herself but gave all to Him. Her love and devotion were in the gift. That is how He measures.

Some explain you should give a tenth of your income to God. But the question is, how much do you keep for yourself? It’s not how much you give to Him. The question is, how much do you really love Him? The Lord is the one who watches how people give. It’s not what they put in. The widow didn’t give anything of great value, but the Lord takes her two coppers and exchanges them for the gold of heaven.

TEACHING FROM A MOUNTAINTOP

Now Jesus moves His conversation and teaching from the temple to a hilltop overlooking Jerusalem. We sit with Him now atop the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from the temple. Here Jesus teaches us about future events that will end this age. He describes God’s power at work in the Great Tribulation and then in His second coming.

From this vista overlooking Temple Mount, the disciples remarked how glorious was the scene outstretched below them. But Jesus asks them, *“Do you really see it?”*

They looked at man’s works for their beauty, strength, stability, and permanence. But all those buildings were temporary. *“One day,”* Jesus said, *“not one stone will to be left upon another. The temple will be completely destroyed.”*

“When will this happen? What will be the signs?” Peter and Andrew, James and John asked Jesus privately.

Remember the Gospel of Mark is written to the Romans, and so Jesus calls attention to that which reveals power and action and drama.

Jesus then warns them—and us—about false teachers and people claiming to be Messiah. Another characteristic of the coming age will be rumors of war, then earthquakes and famines and troubles. This is the beginning of the end.

Today man feels he is so civilized because he has so many gadgets, and he thinks he is making the world such a wonderful place. Then all of a sudden he discovers that he is polluting the earth and that he is going to make it uninhabitable. Before long, unless he cuts down the population explosion, he’s going to starve to death. The Bible says that troubles and famines will come. It is interesting that this Book, which men have despised, is so accurate about it all. A few years ago men thought science would solve the problems of the world. Now we know it has made problems that neither science nor the world can solve.

These are the things that characterize the end of the age.

Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom will emphasize *“repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* In other words, *“He is coming.”* When they say it in that day, it will signal the Great Tribulation.

All salvation is by the grace of God, and God has never had but one way to save sinners and that is by the blood of Jesus Christ.

On that day, 144,000 of the nation Israel will be witnesses. Families will turn against each other. A worldwide anti-Semitism will threaten the Jewish people, but God will put His seal upon them, and they will make it through to the end.

This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The first three and a half years are comparatively quiet; it is the false peace of the Antichrist. Then, in the midst of it, there appears this “abomination of desolation” that the prophet Daniel wrote about. In the Holy Place, a specific place given exclusively to the nation of Israel, an abomination will take place. And on that day, the desolation will be so fast, that Jesus says they should not go back to their homes to pack but they should just run.

This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Those will be terrible days—so terrible that God needed to put a time limit on it so that all of life is not wiped out. Empowered by Satan, false Christs and false prophets will perform genuine wonders.

Jesus’ second coming will be front-lined when the whole universe darkens and by a universal display of heavenly fireworks—when the stars all fall from the sky. And into that sober and magnificent display of power, Jesus, the Son of Man will enter in a grand style, coming again on glory clouds, the shekinah glory radiating from Jesus Himself. The Son of Man will enter in grand style, his arrival filling the sky. He’ll dispatch the angels; they will pull in the chosen from the four winds, from pole to pole.

All of this describes the events which will take place after the Tribulation when Jesus Christ will return to the earth in glory and judgment.

While Jesus was still teaching them about the things to come, He compared it to a young fig tree, blooming in the spring, knowing summer is near. The fig tree is the nation Israel. These events happen quickly, but He promises those who saw the beginning of these events would see the conclusion of them also.

Jesus concluded this teaching with this challenge for God’s people in all ages: *Watch and pray, for you don’t know God’s timetable.*

This instruction is for us today, too. We can watch with anxiety or with joyful anticipation. If you are God’s child, look for that blessed hope and His glorious appearing.

NEXT: Come with reverence into the shadow of the Cross.

LESSON 8

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 14**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 14:1-21** and **Mark 14:22-72**

In this Gospel of action, Jesus is no longer the one performing the action, but He is the focus of other's actions—both friends and enemies.

As we come into the shadow of the Cross, the reverent heart realizes we are on holy ground. There are depths that have not been plumbed and heights that have not been scaled. The action of this moment involves the anguish and agony of His soul. His hour has come! Do you remember at the wedding of Cana when Jesus told His mother, “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4)? Now it has come!

The time has come for Jesus to be delivered up to die. His earthly ministry is finished in the fulfillment of prophecy. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter ...” (Isaiah 53:7). Through these next seven events, Jesus delivers Himself into people's hands. Mary anoints Him, Judas betrays Him, Peter denies Him, and the Sanhedrin arrests Him. He delivers Himself to His Father's will.

Mark 14 and 15 record a strange agreement of heaven and hell. Light and darkness travel together in the same direction. Righteousness and sin head to the Cross, and God and Satan have decided Jesus will be crucified. People's individual decisions converge at the Cross—the same as what happens today.

THE PLOT IS SET IN MOTION

The religious rulers decided that Jesus will be killed—now it's just a question of timing. They decided they would not do it during the Passover season because Jerusalem would be crowded with visitors and the common people loved Jesus because He gladly heard them and fed and healed them. The rulers didn't want to deal with an uproar or riot. They would wait till after Passover, it was decided.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

While some plotted for His death, another worshipped Jesus. At a dinner party early the week Jesus died, a lovely thing happened next to the dark plot to betray Jesus.

Both friend and foe are moving toward the Cross but by different routes. Mary of Bethany comes the way of light and love. And Judas is moved by foul and dark motives. In coming together, we see the vivid contrast and conflict of light and darkness.

Into the crowded room, Mary comes with an expensive bottle of oil. She broke the seal and a fragrance filled the room. She then began anointing Jesus' body, like what is done to prepare a body for burial.

The room quieted, all eyes on Jesus. This was an extravagant gesture and not everyone appreciated what was happening. Judas piously suggested that proceeds from this oil could be used to care for the poor—but sad to say, he just wanted the money himself (he controlled the group's bank).

Jesus saw through the conflict. There would always be opportunities to help the poor, He said, but He was just with them for another couple hours. Mary was doing what she could to honor Him. That is all God ever asks of any of us. Mary showed spiritual discernment sadly lacking in His apostles.

Mary anointed Jesus' body for the burial. Just think of it. This simple woman stood on the fringe of the events leading to the Cross, and she let the Lord Jesus know that she understood. None of the apostles sensed this, but she did. The fragrance of the box of ointment she broke that day has been carried across the centuries by the Holy Spirit unto our day. It still fills hearts with its sweetness even at the present hour. Here in the shadow of His suffering, there was one who understood.

Have any of us broken our alabaster box upon Jesus so there might be a fragrance in our lives and it might be a blessing to others?

Now, right next to this lovely thing Mary did, the light of it and the love of it, Judas' plan to betray the Lord is stirred up in his mind and set in motion.

JESUS IS OUR PASSOVER LAMB

As they got ready to observe Passover, the disciples meticulously followed the Mosaic Law. In a few hours, Jesus was to fulfill the meaning of the Passover.

The Lord had already made arrangements for a place to eat their meal. He had asked a faithful follower to use his guestroom. There were those who loved Jesus and this offer was a wonderful service. We can do many things for the Lord Jesus, and this is what that follower did.

So, Jesus and His men came in the evening to this borrowed room, as Passover began at sundown. He came under cover of darkness so as not to force the religious leaders' hand until He is ready. At the proper time, He will deliver Himself into their hands and they will crucify Him, but it will be according to *His* schedule.

And so Jesus enjoyed this important celebration in a leisurely and informal fellowship with His disciples. The next meal He ate with them was breakfast on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection. This was a wonderful time of fellowship.

Then as the end drew close, Jesus revealed that one among them would betray Him. They became sorrowful and asked, "*Is it me?*" They all knew they were capable of doing it. If you have not yet discovered you are a sinner, thoroughly capable of turning your back on God, you don't know yourself well. Each of us could ask, "Is it me?"

The Lord essentially tells Judas, "*What you've planned to do—get it over with.*" The original plot was to wait for a more convenient time to betray Him, but Judas must have rushed out to the Pharisees and said, "*You'd better go get Him now because our plot has been discovered. He told me to do quickly that which I planned to do. He may leave town.*" So they got the guards together and went out to arrest Him.

Now, as the countdown clock was ticking down, Jesus instituted a new feast on the dying embers of the old, the Passover feast. The Passover cup went around seven times during dinner. With each time, they sang one of

the great Hallel Psalms. On the seventh time around, Jesus did not drink, but instituted a new remembrance—the Lord’s Supper. The Passover looked forward to Jesus coming as the Passover Lamb, and now the Lord’s Supper looks back to His death. The bread speaks of His body that will be broken and the wine speaks of His blood He will shed. When we observe the Lord’s Supper now, we remember this night and what He did for us on the Cross two thousand years ago.

The Passover will be restored again in the millennial Kingdom. It will look forward to His coming and also look backward to His offering, bringing out the real meaning of the Passover: “... For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

As the Passover feast ends, they sing a hymn and head over to the Mount of Olives across town. As they walked, Jesus tells them about His death—and then, for His plans to meet them in Galilee after His resurrection. All this information must have felt overwhelming to the disciples.

Peter is still thinking about Jesus’ betrayal and pledges his allegiance to Jesus. He was sincere, of course, but he did not know his own weakness. That is our problem, too. None of us knows the depths of the human heart. Only the Word of God can let us see what sinners we are. When we recognize that, we go to the Lord. He is the Chief and the Great Physician. By the way, He is also the Great Psychologist and He alone knows us. In the final analysis, He is the *only* One. We have a Savior who loves us and waits with open arms. How wonderful to have Someone we can go to.

When Peter boasts about never betraying Jesus, Jesus prepares him for what’s coming in his life. He lets Peter know that He is going to stand by him, even when Peter denies Him. The Lord will also stand by you in times like this. He will be there in your most desperate and dastardly hour. He certainly was with this man Peter.

The Garden of Gethsemane must have been a frequent spot for Jesus and the disciples and a place Judas had gone often with the Lord. That’s how Judas knew to lead the enemy there.

There are only eleven disciples now. Jesus leaves the eight and takes His three—Peter, James, and John—a step closer to Him in this hour. He went to pray and to face an intense ordeal in the garden, described as a heavy,

distressed time. Jesus faces a soul struggle that was as great, if not greater, than the suffering His body endured on the Cross. Perhaps He faced Satan again here in the garden. There are mysteries in the garden we cannot understand. We can only stand at the edge and watch Him pray.

He asked the Father that the hour might pass from Him. It was not *death* He dreaded but rather the *hour* of the Cross—that moment sin was to be put on Him, when He was made sin for us. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Hebrews 5:7-8 for more on this.)

When He returns to the place where He asked the three disciples to watch and pray, He finds them sleeping. He wakes them up and asks them to pray. At a time when He needs them and they need to pray, their flesh is weak. A little while later, Jesus returns again and again they are asleep. They had no explanation for their failure. We certainly learn here that the flesh cannot be trusted.

The third time Jesus returns after agonizing in prayer, He again finds them asleep. This time He tells them to take their rest since the hour has come. “The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (14:41).

JESUS IS ARRESTED

And here comes Judas, leading a huge group of soldiers. The leaders had said they wouldn’t arrest Jesus during the feast days, but here they are. Judas conspired with them that he would kiss the one they should arrest. Apparently Jesus, in His humanity, looked no different from any other man in the crowd. What treachery. A kiss is a badge of love and affection, but Judas used it to betray Christ.

Jesus yields Himself “into the hands of sinful men,” on His way now to the Cross. He observes that they didn’t come for Him in the temple, but here and now so Scripture would be fulfilled. If these people had believed their own Scriptures, they might have hesitated or even changed their minds.

Peter attempts to come to His rescue. He draws a sword, intent on cutting the throat of one of Jesus’ captors. But instead, he cuts off the soldier’s ear. Simon Peter was a pretty good fisherman but a pretty sorry swordsman.

The disciples all deserted him, and ran—once again, in fulfillment of prophecy.

MIDNIGHT MEETINGS AND ILLEGAL TRIALS

“And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes” (14:53).

They led Jesus away through the empty streets of Jerusalem past midnight. And they brought Him before Caiaphas, the high priest Rome acknowledged. Annas, his father-in-law, was the high priest according to the Mosaic Law. Some believe Annas was the real rascal behind the plot to kill Jesus.

This special midnight meeting of the Sanhedrin was illegal, and so was their method to only hear witnesses against Jesus. Many were willing to bear false witness, but no two agreed. A charge had to be established with at least two witnesses.

Jesus did not defend Himself, again fulfilling prophecy: “... as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). His silence surprised and annoyed the high priest who wanted Jesus to condemn Himself. Finally, under oath, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. He could make no higher claim. He added that someday they would see it themselves:

“... You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (14:62; He quoted Daniel 7:13-14).

The high priest understood what Jesus meant. In a rage, he tore his robe and cried, “*Do you hear His blasphemy?!*” (In tearing his clothes, he broke the Mosaic Law.)

Now they had a charge: blasphemy. They condemned Him to die because He claimed to be the Messiah. They spit on Him, blind-folded, slapped, and punched Him. Imagine spitting in the face of the Son of God!

While this farce of the trial was in progress, Simon Peter was in a trial of his own making, in a place of great temptation. He was hanging around the palace, wanting to be near Jesus. But when a young girl identified him as one of Jesus’ men, Peter denied even knowing Him. But the girl wouldn’t give up and Peter hotly contested it. He was ashamed to be known as a follower of Jesus.

If you've ever been in a similar position, you understand his shame. May God forgive our cowardice and weakness as He did Peter's. Simon Peter loved Jesus, and he was sincere when he promised to be loyal to Him, he just didn't know his own weakness.

But Peter could repent of his sin, and that is the real test of a genuine follower of Jesus. His were tears of heartbroken repentance. Years later, Peter told how the Lord Jesus had kept him!

Jesus is now in the hands of His enemies. His own are scattered. One has betrayed Him; another has denied Him. It is the night of sin! Jesus is now just hours away from the Cross and about His work of saving us.

NEXT: The Son of God secures our so great a salvation.

LESSON 8



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Explain in your own words what this means: “Mark 14 and 15 record a strange agreement of heaven and hell. Light and darkness travel together in the same direction. Righteousness and sin head to the Cross, and God and Satan have decided Jesus will be crucified. People’s individual decisions converge at the Cross—the same as what happens today.”

2. What is it about Mary’s action at the dinner party that touches Jesus? What about her stands out to you?

3. Why is the Passover meal significant to the Jews? What about Jesus’ actions makes it significant to us today?

4. Jesus' arrest and trials are full of human drama.
What about Peter's story resonates with you?

LESSON 9

THANKS BE TO GOD



Begin with prayer



Read **Mark 15–16**



Listen at [TTB.org/Mark](https://www.TTB.org/Mark) to **Mark 15:1-37** and **Mark 15:38–16:20**

The Cross of Jesus Christ is one of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith. It is both the greatest tragedy of the ages and the most glorious victory of earth and heaven.

We'll approach it not with feelings of defeat or sympathy for the Sufferer, but we'll walk softly and reverently through these scenes. Our hearts should well up in thanksgiving to God for providing us so great a salvation.

We begin now with Jesus in the hands of His enemies. His own disciples have scattered. One has betrayed Him. Another has repeatedly denied Him.

On this dark night, sin is the issue in two very different ways. Sin is trying to destroy Jesus Christ. And Jesus is paying the price for our sin.

The inescapable, tragic note of these scenes is Jesus enduring the cruel injustice and bitter suffering. But He does not want our sympathy—He wants our *faith*. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Read Romans 10:9-10.)

As we know, Mark is the Gospel of action, and now we are at the climactic point and crowning event—the Crucifixion. All of creation and the purposes of God from all eternity have been moving towards this moment. Jesus Christ is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). The gospel is now translated into action! (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The gospel is what Jesus did. It is *His* action, not anything we can do. Nothing we could do would be acceptable to God because our righteousness is not enough. God must, and does, provide that righteousness in Jesus Christ. (Read Romans 4:25.)

WHEN THEY PUT JESUS ON TRIAL

Now in Mark 15, the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to die, but only Rome could carry out the execution. The problem was, their charge of blasphemy was not an acceptable offense for the death penalty, so they made up charges that would make *legal* their illegal action from the night before.

Pilate was a politician. He was motivated by expediency rather than justice. He looked for compromise. He wanted to release Jesus when he discovered He was innocent, but Jesus wouldn't cooperate; He wouldn't defend Himself.

Then Pilate thought he could get off the hook by releasing a prisoner. Surely, the crowd would choose Jesus over Barabbas, a murderer and insurrectionist. But the religious leaders had stirred up the crowd with a vengeance, telling them to demand Jesus' death.

Pilate had a dilemma. He knew the charges brought against Jesus were false. He also knew Barabbas was a hardened criminal.

Pilate, a weak, vacillating politician, yielded to the mob, and delivered Jesus to be crucified. Roman justice certainly went crooked here. An innocent man is to die. In fact, the Lord Jesus was likely crucified on the cross intended for Barabbas. But wait—Jesus is taking our place, too. And we are *not* innocent.

THE BEAUTIFUL, WRETCHED CROSS

“Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison” (15:16).

Jesus was turned over to brutal soldiers who could do as they pleased with the prisoner. They humiliated and tortured Him, a plaything for their sadistic appetites. Jesus was a strong, muscular young man, but they beat Him viciously—which is why they needed to pull a man out of the crowd to carry Jesus' crossbeam. Yet still they kept whipping Him and spitting on Him. This was more than ordinary human hatred. This was brutal and cruel, revealing the sinful depths of the human heart.

Their cruelty got creative as they mocked Jesus' claim He is the King of the Jews and threw on Him a purple robe and pressed a crown of thorns on His head. And still the Cross was before Jesus in a place called, Golgotha, "the place of a skull."

No Gospel writer records the details of the Crucifixion; we only get snapshots. God drew a veil over the scene as if to say, "*It's too horrible.*"

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they hung Jesus on the cross. The charge for which they crucified Him was written above His head: "The King of the Jews." Strange as it may sound, this is true—but not as they meant it. He led no rebellion against Rome, He simply offered Himself to Israel and they rejected Him.

People mocked Him saying, "*He saved others, but He can't save Himself.*" And that, too, is true. He could not save others and at the same time save Himself. So He gave Himself for others—this is the great principle of redemption.

Mark gives us the Crucifixion by the clock. The first three hours were from 9 A.M. until 12 NOON; the second three hours were from 12 NOON to 3 P.M.

In the first three hours, there was physical light; in the second three hours, there was physical darkness.

In the first three hours, there was spiritual darkness; in the second three hours, there was spiritual light.

In those first three hours, man did his worst. They hated and crucified Him. Even those criminals hanging with Jesus reviled Him. His enemies, marching around beneath the cross, wagged their heads and ridiculed Him. In the first three hours, man did his very worst. In the second three hours, God was working.

Jesus suffered at man's hands in the first three hours; He suffered *for* man in the last three hours.

In the first three hours, He was dying because of sin; in the second three hours, He was dying for the sin of the world.

In those first three hours, sin did all it could to destroy Him; in the second three hours, He made His soul an offering for sin. He paid for the sins of the world by becoming sin for us. He was forsaken of God and yet, even at that time, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (read 2 Corinthians 5:19). What a paradox!

Then when our salvation was complete, Jesus cried out and gave His last breath. He did not die because the bodily organs refused to function. He dismissed His spirit. This made His death different from ours even in a physical sense.

At that moment the temple curtain ripped right down the middle, from top to bottom. The priests in the temple saw it happen. At that very moment, 3 P.M., they were serving in the temple, making the evening sacrifice. Later we learn that many priests came to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (see Acts 6:7).

The veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies represented our separation from God, according to the book of Leviticus. The veil speaks of the life of Christ that shuts us out from God. His sinless life shows how sinful our lives are. The moment He died, the veil was ripped in two, opening our way to God. Jesus' death, not His life, brings us to God.

When the Roman captain standing guard in front of Jesus saw that He had quit breathing, he said, *"This has to be the Son of God!"* This centurion's confession of faith revealed his faith; he acknowledged that Jesus is God's Son. He didn't have all the details of theology, but he knew enough to take his place beneath the Cross of Christ. That is all God has ever asked any sinner to do. He asks us to come in faith to Him.

Next we learn about the women who were still with Jesus at the Cross. His disciples had scattered, but the women were faithful to the very end.

THE NEWS THAT TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Jesus died right before the Sabbath began on Friday evening. The Sabbath ended at sundown on Saturday. Now, before dawn on Sunday morning, the first day of the week, the same women who were with Jesus at the Cross came to His tomb to anoint Jesus' body. But they were never able to use their oils and spices because when they got to the tomb, Jesus was gone—He was alive again. They had worried about how to roll the stone away from the door, but when they got there, the stone had been rolled away, revealing the empty tomb—Jesus' body was gone. A heavenly messenger sat inside instead and specifically told the women to go and report the news to the disciples.

The disciples thought it better to stay under cover until all the excitement died down and they were no longer in danger. None of them even intended to visit Jesus' tomb.

Mary Magdalene lingered at the tomb and was the first one Jesus greeted in His resurrected body. When she told the disciples that Jesus was alive, they didn't believe her. Not until Jesus appeared in a locked room where the disciples were gathered did they believe He had risen from the dead. He called them out for their stubborn unbelief, refusing to believe those who had seen him raised up. Then He gave them a challenge:

"Go everywhere and tell everyone the Good News!"

Jesus is telling them to get into action! They are to go. And we are to go—we are to be men and women of action for God. What are you doing today to get out the Word of God? This is our business, friend.

The Gospel of Mark concludes with the simple statement that Jesus returned to heaven and is right now at God's right hand. The disciples *did* carry the gospel to every creature, and the Lord *did* work with them and confirmed the Word with signs which they performed.

Believing that Jesus, in His body, rose from the dead is the heart and core doctrine of what it means to be a Christian. Every sermon in the book of Acts is a message on the Resurrection—every speaker got to this subject. The early church talked and thought about it constantly. The message that Jesus rose from the dead electrified a lethargic and sinful generation in the Roman Empire. It turned them upside down, wrong side out, and right side up; and those who believed went out to tell the world about it.

This is the Gospel of action. May we be men and women of *action* for God!

LESSON 9



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Agree or disagree: “The Cross of Jesus Christ is both the greatest tragedy of the ages and the most glorious victory of earth and heaven.”

2. If you write in your Bible, you might want to copy this next to Mark 15:

9 AM—12 NOON: **Jesus suffered at man’s hands**

12 NOON—3 PM: **Jesus suffered *for* man**

9 AM—12 NOON: **Jesus was dying because of sin**

12 NOON—3 PM: **Jesus was dying for the sin of the world**

9 AM—12 NOON: **Sin did all it could to destroy Him**

12 NOON—3 PM: **He made His soul an offering for sin**

On the cross, Jesus paid for the sins of the world by becoming sin for us. He was forsaken of God and yet, even at that time, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

What a paradox!

3. The Gospel of Mark is called the Gospel of action. One of the last things Jesus told His disciples before He returned to heaven was, “Go everywhere and tell everyone the Good News!” What good news did the Gospel of Mark tell you that you can share?

**We are to be people
of *action* for God.**

What are you doing *today* to
get out the Word of God?

—●—
This is our business, friend.



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A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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