
Mark's Good News

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary) on Mark's Gospel
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This commentary **has been** through Advanced Checking.
Words in boxes are from the Bible.
A word list at the end explains words with a *star by them.

About Mark

*New Testament references

A The *disciples met in Jerusalem at the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12).

B Mark was a relative of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). He went to help Paul and Barnabas on their first journey to *preach the good news (Acts 13:5). He turned back at Perga and he went home (Acts 13:13). Paul, therefore, refused to take him on the next journey. Mark then went with Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:37-39).

C Mark was a 'worker' with Paul. Paul was in prison in Rome (Philemon 24; Colossians 4:10). He had been a help to Paul. Paul wanted Timothy to bring Mark to him. He would help Paul again (2 Timothy 4:11).

D Peter called him 'Mark, my son' (1 Peter 5:13). This was probably because he had helped Mark to believe in Christ.

Early Christian writers

There are some details that are in this *Gospel only. These details show that they probably come from an eye-witness. An eye-witness was there when the events happened. Two early writers said that Peter gave Mark the information for his *Gospel.

Tradition

Mark went to Alexandria, the important centre for trade and learning. There he started a Christian church.

When Mark wrote his *Gospel

Most writers agree that Mark was the first person to write a *Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke seem to use it. Mark perhaps completed it in the year 65, soon after Peter's death.

What Mark wrote in his *Gospel

1 Mark wanted to show that Jesus was the 'Son of God'. So he emphasises how the crowds and the *disciples were very often astonished at Jesus' actions. Jesus made the storm on the lake become calm (4:41). Then the *disciples asked, 'Who is this?' They had a feeling of fear. And they greatly respected Jesus. Evil *spirits recognised who Jesus was. Mark also records that (3:11; 5:7).

2 At the same time, Mark shows that Jesus was really human. He was 'the *carpenter' (6:3). He became tired and he became asleep (4:38). He had human feelings. He felt sad (6:34), and he was angry at wrong ideas and actions (3:5; 11:15-17).

3 There are details that are only in Mark's *Gospel. They give us the idea that someone had been an eye-witness. (See 'Early Christian writers' above.) In the account of the storm on the lake, 'there were other boats with him'. Jesus was 'in the back of the boat with his head on a cushion' (4:35, 38). The groups of people were sitting on the 'green' grass (6:39). On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking 'ahead of them' (10:32). Jesus 'took the children into his arms' (10:16). The blind man 'threw off his coat' (10:50).

4 Mark records some of the actual *Aramaic words that Jesus used. He gave James and John the name 'Boanerges' (3:17). He raised Jairus's daughter with the words 'Talitha cumi' (5:41). He said 'Ephphatha' to the deaf man (7:34). He called his Father '*Abba' (14:36). The cry from the *cross was in *Aramaic (15:34).

5 Mark shows how the crowds, the *disciples and Jesus' own family did not understand Jesus. The *religious leaders opposed him. Most people had the wrong idea about what the *Messiah should be like.

6 Christians were suffering for their *faith when Mark wrote. He showed them that Jesus suffered. He suffered in the plan of God and he made the *Scriptures come true.

7 Mark uses the word 'immediately' very many times. He wants to emphasise the power of Jesus, whose command always brought a quick result (1:20, 42; 2:12; 5:42). It is also as if he is anxious to reach the end of the story. He cannot wait to tell everyone about the death and *resurrection of Jesus. Mark knew that these two events were 'good news' for everyone. When Jesus suffered, it made it possible for God to *save people. 'The Son of Man did not come for people to serve him. Instead, he came to serve other people. He came to give his life as the price to make many people free' (10:45).

Chapter 1

The heading 1:1

v1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Verse 1 The first verse is also the title of the *Gospel. The human Jesus was the Christ, the *Messiah that the *Jews were expecting. The *Greek word 'Christ' and the *Hebrew word '*Messiah' mean the '*Anointed Man'. To *anoint someone showed that God had chosen them for a special responsibility. Samuel *anointed Saul to be king (1 Samuel 10:1). Jesus was the king who came to bring people into his *kingdom. He came to make people free from the power of *sin. Moses made Aaron and his sons special as priests by *anointing them with oil (Leviticus 8:12). Jesus was also a priest who was giving a *sacrifice to God. The *sacrifice that he gave was himself. Jesus is both king and priest. That is the good news.

Mark writes about Jesus as the true 'Son of God'. As the Son of God, he showed God's love and power in all that he did. Mark records more of Jesus' actions than of his words.

The work of John the *Baptist 1:2-8

*Old Testament *prophecy spoke about someone who would prepare the way for the *Messiah. John the *Baptist urged people to show that they were ready for the *Messiah. When they wanted to change their behaviour, John *baptised them in the River Jordan.

v2 In the book of the *prophet Isaiah, God said,
'Look, I am sending my *messenger before you.

And he will prepare your way.

v3 A voice is calling out in the wild country,

“Prepare the way for the *Lord.

Make straight paths for him.” ’

v4 This *messenger was John the *Baptist. He appeared in the desert. He was *preaching that people should turn away from their *sins. *Baptism would show that they wanted God to forgive them. **v5** People from all the country of Judea and from Jerusalem went out to John. They confessed that they had done wrong things. So John *baptised them in the River Jordan. **v6** John wore clothes that he had made from camel’s hair. He had a leather belt round him. He ate insects called locusts. And he ate wild honey that came from another kind of insect. **v7** He announced, ‘Someone will come after me. He is much greater than I am. I am not even good enough to be his slave. **v8** I have *baptised you with water. But he will *baptise you with the *Holy Spirit.’

Verses 2-3 John the *Baptist’s work was like that of someone who announced the arrival of an important official. There had been no *prophet for 400 years, since the time of Malachi. Malachi wrote about the *messenger (verse 2 is from Malachi 3:1). Mark combines this verse with one from Isaiah (40:3). Isaiah describes a ‘voice’ that is shouting in the desert. John the *Baptist describes himself as that ‘voice’ (John 1:23).

Verses 4-5 The *Jews *baptised *Gentiles who wanted to accept the *Jewish *faith. John changed this custom. Water cleans the body. John *baptised *Jews to be ‘clean’ in their behaviour towards God and other people. Then they would be ready for the *Messiah. The Messiah would help them to know that God had really forgiven them.

Verse 6 John lived a simple life in the desert. He wore rough clothes like those of the *prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). He was therefore very different from the proud *religious leaders with their long clothes (Mark 12:38). His food was simple. Locusts were insects that the law allowed people to eat (Leviticus 11:22-23). John could obtain honey from wild insects.

Verse 7 John was humble. The *Messiah would be much more important than he was. John knew that. He said that he was not even good enough to be the *Messiah’s slave.

Verse 8 John’s *baptism with water showed that people were willing to turn away from their *sin. Jesus’ gift of the *Holy Spirit would give people the power to live a new life.

The *baptism and *temptation of Jesus 1:9-13

Jesus came to the River Jordan, where John *baptised him. Immediately afterwards, he went into the desert, where *Satan *tempted him.

v9 At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. John *baptised him in the River Jordan. **v10** When Jesus came up out of the water, at once he saw the heavens open. He saw the *Holy Spirit. The Spirit came down like a gentle bird on Jesus. **v11** Then a voice from heaven spoke. ‘You are my son whom I love. I am very pleased with you’, the voice said. **v12** The Spirit immediately made him go out into the desert. **v13** He was in the desert for 40 days. There *Satan *tempted him. Jesus was with the wild animals. God’s *messengers took care of him.

Verse 9 Jesus did not need *baptism, because he had no *sin to confess. But he made himself united with the people that he came to rescue from their *sins. His *baptism also was to show the beginning of his work.

Verse 10 The *Holy Spirit gave him the power for his future work. The *Holy Spirit came in the shape of a gentle bird. This may mean that he came in a gentle way. He came as a bird would fly down. This would also remind Mark’s readers of the same kind of gentle bird in Genesis 8:5-12. That bird came back to Noah in his special boat. It was the sign of a new beginning (Genesis 8:6-12).

Verse 11 The message from heaven used words from the *Old Testament. Isaac was the son whom Abraham loved (Genesis 22:2). God was ‘very pleased’ with the Servant whom he had chosen. Jesus therefore knew that God approved of him. He also knew that his work would be that of a servant. He would know that the last of Isaiah’s ‘Servant’ songs spoke about a ‘suffering’ servant (Isaiah 53).

Verse 12 'made him go'. Jesus had a very powerful feeling that God was urging him to go into the desert. For Mark's readers, the desert was a place where evil *spirits lived. Jesus went there to begin the battle with *Satan.

Verse 13 'Forty (40) days' may be an exact number or it may mean a fairly long time. '**Satan' is God's enemy. He tried to make Jesus use his power in ways that would not please God. Mark does not record the nature of the *temptations. Matthew and Luke tell us how *Satan *tempted Jesus. He tempted him to gain *disciples by providing for their *physical needs. They would follow him if he astonished them with *miracles. They wanted a *Messiah who would lead an army against the *Romans to gain their political freedom. Jesus chose the hard way to persuade people to love and obey God. He would love them. Love meant that he would suffer. But he would satisfy '*spiritual hunger' and he would give people freedom from *sin. Jesus can encourage Christians because he has had all sorts of *temptations himself. 'The Devil tried to make him do all kinds of wrong things. So, Jesus understands all the wrong things that we might do. But he never did anything wrong himself' (Hebrews 4:15).

Mark adds that Jesus was 'with the wild animals'. This detail may show that the desert was a very frightening place. But it may also be Mark's way to show the age when men and animals would live together in peace (Isaiah 11:6-9). Jesus could live in safety with the animals. This would be because the animals were already recognising him as their king.

'God's *messengers took care of him.' God does not leave men alone in a time of *temptation. His *messengers helped Jesus.

The message of Jesus 1:14-15

After Herod put John in prison, Jesus went into Galilee. He *preached that God's *kingdom had arrived. Men must change their ways and believe him and his message.

v14 After Herod put John in prison, Jesus came into Galilee district. He *preached the good news about God's rule. **v15** He said, 'The right time has come. God's rule is coming near. *Repent and believe in the good news.'

Verses 14-15 Mark explains in chapter 6:17-18 why Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, put John in prison.

'The right time'. God chose the time to send Jesus when everything was ready. There were good *Roman roads. *Greek was a very well-known language. The message could therefore spread easily. *Jewish belief in only one God also prepared for the good news.

The *kingdom of God is not a place. It is God's rule over the world. All those people who let God rule over their lives belong to his *kingdom. God had always been king. But, by Jesus, he was giving people a new opportunity to obey him. The message was 'good news'. It helped people to have peace because God had forgiven them. It helped them to hope that they could win the struggle against *sin.

'*Repent' means to turn away from wrong things and to turn to God. It means that we decide to live in a new way. We start to obey God.

'Believe' means 'trust in'. Those who believe Jesus have confidence in him. They know that he spoke the truth. And they know that he will *keep his promises.

Jesus calls his first *disciples 1:16-20

v16 Jesus was walking along next to lake Galilee. There he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were throwing a net into the lake because they were working. Their work was to catch fish. **v17** Jesus spoke to them. 'Come and follow me. I will show you how to fish for people', he said. **v18** Immediately, they left their nets and they followed him. **v19** Jesus walked on a little distance from there. Then he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother. They were in their boat and they were mending the nets. **v20** Immediately, he called them. They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the paid servants. And they went after Jesus.

Verse 16 Galilee is a lake about 12 miles long. To catch fish was an important business. Many men earned their income by supplying fish to people in their own country. They also exported fish, even as far as Rome. Salt stopped it from going off.

Verses 17-20 These four men, who became Jesus' first *disciples, had met him before. They were probably John the *Baptist's *disciples in Judea (John 1:35-42). They had listened to Jesus and they had talked with him. He called them while they were carrying out their ordinary work.

Verse 17 They had worked to bring in fish. So they must work to bring people to Jesus. They needed patience and skill to catch fish in their nets. Jesus would teach them the patience and skill to bring people into his *kingdom.

Verse 20 Zebedee still had his paid servants. They would look after him and his business when his two sons left to follow Jesus.

Jesus in the *Jewish meeting place at Capernaum 1:21-28

Jesus astonished people by the authority with which he taught. And he astonished people by his power to cure a man with an evil *spirit.

v21 They went into Capernaum. Immediately on the *Sabbath day, he went into the *Jewish meeting place and he taught. **v22** They were astonished at the way that he taught. He taught them like someone who had real authority. He did not teach as the *scribes did. **v23** And immediately, a man whom an evil *spirit possessed was in the meeting place. **v24** He shouted out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy Man that God has sent.' **v25** But Jesus gave a command. He said, 'Be silent and come out of him!' **v26** Then, the evil *spirit threw the man down and it shook him hard. Then it screamed and it came out of him. **v27** All the people were astonished. They asked each other, 'What kind of teaching is this? He has such authority. He even gives orders to evil *spirits and they obey him.' **v28** The news about what Jesus had done spread quickly through the whole of Galilee.

Verse 21 Capernaum was an ideal place for Jesus to work in. Both *Jews and *Gentiles would hear his message because Capernaum was an important town on a trade route. The *Sabbath was the *Jewish day of rest from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. It was a special day for *worship. There was a meeting place wherever there were ten *Jewish families. In this meeting place, *Jews met to pray, and to study the *Old Testament. They would attend other public meetings there. On the *Sabbath, people would go to the meeting place in order to hear a teacher. The teacher would read and explain the *Scriptures. There was no permanent teacher. So the leader would invite visiting teachers to give the talk. Jesus was therefore able to teach in meeting places wherever he went.

Verse 22 *Scribes were men who studied the *Old Testament, especially the first five books. These five books were the 'Torah', which means the 'Law'. These experts never gave their own decision about the meaning of a passage. They always gave the opinions of well-known teachers. Because they gave more than one opinion, people did not receive satisfactory answers to their questions. Jesus knew the *Scriptures. And he knew what they meant. He spoke with his own authority. He often used the words, 'I say to you' (Matthew 5:18-44).

Verses 23-24 A man whom an evil *spirit possessed. Some people say that this was a way to describe mental illness. They say that evil *spirits did not exist. But people in those days believed that they existed. And they believed that they could control a person. Many people believe that evil *spirits did exist in the time of Jesus. They believe that they still exist today. The evil *spirits inside the man recognised that Jesus had come to destroy every evil thing. They were afraid and they asked Jesus not to do anything against them.

Verses 25-26 Jesus stopped the man from shouting. He gave a strict command and he cured the man. People who tried to send evil *spirits out of people used all kinds of ceremonies and special words. But Jesus threw out the evil *spirit by his order alone.

Mark tells us about many other times when Jesus sent evil *spirits out of people. He wanted to show the authority and power of Jesus. He wanted to show that Jesus is the *Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus cures the mother of Peter's wife 1:29-31

v29 Immediately, Jesus and his *disciples left the meeting place. They went to Simon and Andrew's home. James and John were with them. **v30** The mother of Simon's wife was ill in bed and she was very hot. They spoke to Jesus about her at once. **v31** Jesus came and he took her by the hand. He helped her up and the illness left her. She prepared a meal for them.

Verse 29 Mark does not use the name 'Peter' until he gives the list of the 12 *apostles (Mark 3:16). Jesus gave Simon the name 'Peter' when they met in Judea. John tells us that (John 1:42).

Verse 30 Peter was married. After the *resurrection, he and his wife travelled together in God's service (1 Corinthians 9:5).

They told Jesus about her illness. Perhaps they were explaining why a meal was not ready. They may have hoped that Jesus would help her. Christians can always tell Jesus about the needs of other people.

Verse 31 Usually people feel very weak after they have been ill like that. Jesus cured this lady completely. She was able to get up at once and she prepared a meal for them.

Jesus cures many people 1:32-34

v32 That evening at sunset, people brought to Jesus all the people who were sick. They also brought those whom evil *spirits controlled. **v33** And the whole city gathered together at the door. **v34** And Jesus cured great numbers of sick people who had many different kinds of diseases. He ordered many evil *spirits to come out. But they knew who he was. So, he would not allow the evil *spirits to speak.

Verse 32 People could not carry their sick relatives on the *Sabbath. The *scribes said that to carry something was 'work'. The *Sabbath ended when the sun set on Saturday. Then they brought their sick friends and relatives to Jesus.

Verse 33 Mark probably did not mean that all the inhabitants of Capernaum were outside Peter's door. He meant that there was a large crowd.

Verse 34 Jesus would not allow the evil *spirits to speak. They knew that he was the *Messiah. Jesus wanted people to discover for themselves who he was. They would follow him for the wrong reason if they thought of him as a political leader. Jesus was a *Messiah who would suffer to free them from *sin. He wanted to show people that.

Jesus' prayer 1:35-39

v35 In the morning, a long time before day, Jesus got up. He went out to a place where he could be alone. There he prayed. **v36** Simon and his friends went to look for Jesus. **v37** When they found him, they said, 'Everyone is searching for you.' **v38** Jesus replied, 'Let us go on to the next towns so that I can *preach there also. Because that is why I came.' **v39** So Jesus travelled all through Galilee. He *preached in the places where the *Jewish people met. And he threw out evil *spirits.

Verse 35 Jesus had helped crowds of people. He needed to pray to God in order to receive new strength and peace of mind. He also needed God to guide him. He must decide whether he should continue to work in Capernaum. He needed to know if it was right to move to other places.

Verses 36-37 Simon and his friends realised that Jesus had gone. The people who were searching for Jesus probably hoped for more healing *miracles.

Verse 38 Jesus knew that his first task was to *preach. He must take time to invite people into his *kingdom. He had come into the world to teach as many people as possible.

Jesus cures a man with a very bad skin disease 1:40-45

The man had a skin disease that prevented him from living a normal life. Jesus cured him. So he was able to go back to live among other people.

v40 A man who had a very bad skin disease came to Jesus. He went on his knees in front of Jesus and he asked Jesus to cure him. 'If you want to, you can make me clean', he said. **v41** Jesus pitied him greatly. He reached out and he touched the man with his hand. He said, 'I do want to. Be clean.' **v42** Immediately, the disease left him and he was clean. **v43** Jesus sent him away at once. He gave him a strict order. **v44** He said, 'Do not tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priest. Offer to God the gift that Moses ordered. That will show people that you are clean.' **v45** But the man went away and he began to talk to everyone. He spread the news, so that Jesus could not enter a town in public. He had to stay outside in places where few people lived. People still came to him from everywhere.

Verse 40 The word 'leprosy' is in many Bibles and it can mean various skin diseases. One was the serious disease that is called 'leprosy' today. Anyone with this disease had to stay away from other people. He suffered in two ways. He had to suffer from his disease. He also suffered from his lonely situation outside society. This man approached Jesus. He believed that Jesus had the power to cure him. But he did not know that Jesus loved people. He was not sure whether Jesus would want to cure him.

Verse 41 Jesus touched the man who had the skin disease. When he did that, Jesus showed his love. *Jews would not normally want to touch anyone who had such a skin disease. They believed that such an action would make them unholy.

Verse 44 Jesus was obeying the law when he sent the man to the priest. The priest would examine him. And the priest would decide that he was healthy again. After the man had carried out the proper ceremonies, he would be able to mix with other people again (Leviticus 14:1-32).

Verse 45 The man who had the skin disease did not obey Jesus. So, he made it difficult for Jesus to continue his work in towns. There were so many people who wanted to see Jesus. They came because of curiosity or because they needed his help.

Chapter 2

Mark has written about Jesus' popularity in Galilee. Now he records five incidents. These incidents all show that the *religious leaders opposed Jesus:

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| 1 | 2:1-12 | They said that he spoke evil words against God. |
| 2 | 2:13-17 | He ate with people who collected taxes. |
| 3 | 2:18-22 | He did not make his *disciples obey the *religious rules about times when people should not eat. |
| 4 | 2:23-28 | He allowed his *disciples to 'work' on the *Sabbath. |
| 5 | 3:1-6 | He cured a man's hand on the *Sabbath. |

Jesus cures a man who could not walk 2:1-12

v1 After some time, Jesus went back to Capernaum again. People heard that he was at home. **v2** So many people gathered that there was no room left. There was not even room outside the door. Jesus was *preaching the message to them. **v3** Four men came to him. They were carrying a man who could not walk. **v4** They could not get near Jesus because of the crowd. So they made a hole in the roof above Jesus. Then they let the man down, through the hole, on his mat. **v5** Jesus saw that these men believed him. He spoke to the man who could not walk. 'Son, you are free from your *sins', he said. **v6** Some of the *scribes were sitting there. They were thinking, **v7** 'This man should not talk like that! He is insulting God! Only God can forgive *sins.' **v8** Jesus knew at once what they were thinking. He said to them, 'You should not think such things. **v9** Ask yourselves this question. Is it easier to say to this man, "God has forgiven your *sins", or to say "Stand up. Pick up your mat and walk"? **v10** I want you to know that the Son of Man really has authority to forgive *sins on earth.' So Jesus spoke to the man who could not walk. **v11** 'I tell you', he said. 'Stand up. Take your mat and go home.' **v12** The man got up. He took up his mat at once. He went out in front of them all. All the people were astonished. They praised God. 'We have never seen anything like this', they said.

Verse 1 The words 'at home' show that it was probably Peter's own house.

Verse 4 The roof was flat. People made it out of sticks. And they covered it with earth that the sun had baked hard. There were stone steps outside to reach the roof.

Verse 5 Jesus knew the *faith of the four men. They had shown *faith when they carried the man to Jesus. They did not give up when they could not get through the door.

Some people do become ill when they have done wrong things. Their guilty conscience affects their body. But a person may suffer because of no fault of his own. However, many people believe that all disease is a punishment from God for *sin. Jesus did not believe this (John 9:2-3; Luke 13:1-5). The man who could not walk may have agreed with the wrong idea. For whatever reason, he felt guilty. He needed to know that God had forgiven him. Only then, would he be able to recover.

Verses 6-7 The *scribes may have come to examine what Jesus was teaching. They were accusing Jesus of insulting God. They were right to think that only God can forgive *sins. But they were wrong about Jesus. He had God's authority.

Verses 8-9 It would be easy to say, 'You are free from your *sins.' But it would be more difficult to prove. If the man could walk again, that would prove the truth of Jesus' words.

Verses 10-11 Jesus used the title 'Son of Man' for himself many times. It can mean 'a man'. It would emphasise that Jesus was really human. It was also the title of a powerful person. That person would come in order to establish a *kingdom. And that *kingdom would never end (Daniel 7:13-14). The name might almost mean '*Messiah'. Jesus used the title to describe himself, but he did not say '*Messiah'. He showed his authority in the words 'I tell you', and by brief commands, 'Stand up. Take your mat. Go home.'

Verse 12 More than once, Mark describes how Jesus' words and actions astonished people (1:22, 27).

Jesus calls Levi:13-17

v13 Jesus went out again at the side of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came and they gathered round him. He taught them. **v14** As he walked along, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus. He was sitting in the office where he collected taxes. 'Follow me', Jesus said to him. So Levi stood up and followed him. **v15** Later, Jesus was having a meal in Levi's house. Many '*sinners' were there with Jesus and his *disciples. These *sinners included men who collected taxes. There were many people like these in the crowds that followed Jesus. **v16** Some teachers of the law and *Pharisees saw Jesus. He was eating with people who *sinned. And he was eating with people who collected taxes. So they asked his *disciples, 'Why does he eat and drink with people like that?' **v17** Jesus heard what they were saying. So he said to them, 'Healthy people do not need a doctor. Sick people do. I have not come to call people who are good already. I have come to call bad people to follow me.'

Verse 14 Levi was probably another name for Matthew. The first *Gospel records that Jesus called Matthew (Matthew 9:9). And Matthew collected taxes. The name Levi is not in the list of the 12 *apostles (Mark 3:16-19).

His work was to collect taxes from people in Capernaum and from merchants who were travelling through the city. People hated those who collected taxes. There were two reasons:

- 1 They were working for the *Romans who were their enemies.
- 2 They had to keep some money for themselves after they had collected the required amount. It was easy for them to cheat people and to demand too much money. They became rich.

Verse 15 Levi invited his friends to a meal. He wanted them to meet Jesus. '*Sinners' describes two kinds of people:

- 1 Those with bad moral behaviour.
- 2 Those who did not obey all the extra rules that the *scribes had made up. The *scribes tried to make a rule for every situation.

Verse 16 The *Pharisees were strict *Jews. Their name means 'the separate men'. They tried to keep their *faith 'separate' from the bad effect of other religions. Many of them lived very good lives. But they said that the rules of the *scribes were as important as the *Old Testament laws. They even refused to obey a command of God in order to obey one of these traditions (Mark 7:9-13). They became proud that they obeyed God's laws. And they obeyed all the rules that the *scribes had made up. They would avoid completely those people that they called '*sinners'. They believed that Jesus was encouraging wrong behaviour. He would also make himself '*unclean' when he ate with '*sinners'.

The *Pharisees made two mistakes:

- 1 Jesus had come to look for '*sinners' in order to bring them into his *kingdom.
- 2 Jesus could meet with all kinds of people, even wicked ones. He would not let them change his own behaviour.

Verse 17 The *Pharisees were like healthy people who do not need a doctor. They thought that they had good *spiritual health. So they would not come to Jesus for help. Jesus had come to look for *sinners. Those *sinners were like sick people, who need a doctor's help. Jesus had come to give them the 'remedy' of God's love. Then they might change their ways. They could start to obey God and so live a 'healthy' life.

The question about not eating 2:18-22

v18 The *disciples of John, and of the *Pharisees, used to stop eating sometimes. People came and asked Jesus, 'Sometimes we do not eat because we want to obey the rules. Sometimes the *Pharisees' *disciples do not eat. Why do your *disciples continue to eat every day?' **v19** Jesus said, 'The bridegroom's guests cannot stop eating while he is still with them. While they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot stop eating. **v20** But the time will come when people will take the bridegroom away from them. Then they will stop eating. **v21** Nobody sews a piece of new cloth onto old clothes. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old. It will make the hole much worse. **v22** And nobody puts new wine into old leather bottles. If they do, the wine will burst the leather bottles. Then the wine will run out and the leather bottles will be of no use. No, people pour new wine into new leather bottles.'

Verse 18 To stop eating food is a way to control the desires of the body. It is also a way to be sorry when a person has done wrong things. Jesus stopped eating when he was in the desert. That was because he was praying. The Day of *Atonement was the only time in the year when *Jews must not eat. Some *Jews stopped eating for two days each week as well. The *Pharisees did it. They wanted other people to see how good they were. So they went about with untidy clothes. They made their faces look as miserable as possible. Jesus taught that their way to stop eating was wrong (Matthew 6:16-18).

Verse 19 There are references in the *Old Testament to God as a bridegroom. The nation of the *Jews was like his bride (Isaiah 62:5; Hosea 2:16). Here, Jesus was the bridegroom. His *disciples were like the friends of the bridegroom at a wedding. A *Jewish wedding party went on for a week. It was a time of great happiness. Nobody would stop eating. While Jesus was with them, the *disciples did not need to stop eating.

Verse 20 Jesus knew that people would kill him one day. Then the *disciples would stop eating.

Verse 21 A piece of new material that you used to mend old clothing would be too strong. It would tear the old clothing and it would make a bigger hole. What Jesus was teaching was new and different from the religion of people like the *Pharisees.

Verse 22 People kept wine in a 'bottle' that someone had made from the skin of a goat. Old skins became dry and hard. New wine, as it became mature, would press against the skin. A new skin could stretch, but an old skin would burst. Both the wine and the skin would be of no more use.

The message of Jesus was as powerful as new wine. The question of the *Pharisees about not eating showed that their attitude was as hard as an old leather bottle. They were refusing to accept the joy that Jesus could give them. Jesus' love and the power of the *Holy Spirit would give men the freedom to serve God with joy. The *Pharisees could not accept new ideas. They believed only in all their rules and therefore they could not serve God in the right way.

The *disciples in the grain field 2:23-28

v23 On God's rest day, Jesus was walking through some fields of corn. His *disciples picked some of the corn as they went along. **v24** Some *Pharisees said to Jesus, 'They should not be doing what is against the law on God's rest day.' **v25** And Jesus answered, 'Surely you have read what David did. He and his men were hungry. **v26** He went into God's house when Abiathar was *chief priest. He took the bread that people had offered to God. Our Law did not allow them to eat that bread. Only the priests had the right to eat it. David ate it and he even gave it to his men as well.' **v27** Jesus said, 'God made the rest day for man. He did not make man for the rest day. **v28** So the Son of Man is *Lord even of God's rest day.'

Verse 23 It was legal for people to pick the top parts of the corn plants. The *disciples were not stealing (Deuteronomy 23:25).

Verse 24 The *Pharisees said that the *disciples were 'working' on the rest day. They were picking the grain, so they were bringing in a harvest. The *disciples would have separated the grain from the dry outer part. The *Pharisees said that they were doing farming work.

Verses 25-26 Jesus reminded them about what David did. When he was escaping from king Saul, David and his men went into the holy place at Nob. He and his men ate the bread that God intended only for the priests. This bread was called 'the bread of the *Lord's presence'. That meant that it showed that God was there. Twelve (12) loaves for the 12 *tribes of Israel's people were a sign of God's provision of their food. Every rest day, the priests put new loaves on the special table. It was 'holy' bread. So the priests were the only people whom the law allowed to eat the old loaves (Leviticus 24:5-9). But because David and his men were hungry, their need was more important than the law.

Verse 27 God gave the rest day to make life better for everyone. It existed in order to give people rest for their body. It was also a special opportunity to *worship God. God did not create man to become the slaves of all kinds of rules.

Verse 28 'Son of Man' can mean just 'man'. Jesus said that the *Pharisees were changing God's law. They were not allowing people to have the help that God intended. But 'Son of Man' might mean Jesus himself. He was the *Messiah who came from the family line of king David. If David could take no notice of a law for a good reason, Jesus could take no notice of men's traditions.

Chapter 3

Jesus cures a man's hand on God's rest day 3:1-6

v1 Jesus went again into the building where they met to *worship God. A man was there. Something had damaged his hand. **v2** The *Pharisees wanted a reason to say that Jesus was not obeying the law. So they watched him to see if he would cure on God's rest day. **v3** Jesus said to the man with the bad hand, 'Come here.' **v4** And Jesus asked them, 'Does the law allow us to do good things on God's rest day or to do bad things? Does it allow us to save life or to kill?' But they would not answer. **v5** Jesus looked round at them in anger. He was very upset because their hearts were so hard. He said to the man, 'Reach out your hand.' So the man reached out his hand, and it became well again. It was quite as good as his other hand. **v6** The *Pharisees went out and they immediately plotted with the *Herodians. They tried to decide how to kill Jesus.

Verse 2 The *Pharisees were jealous of Jesus' popularity. He had shown that their attitudes were wrong. They were very careful about what they should not do on the rest day. They were less careful about what they should do. They allowed someone to cure on the rest day if the patient might die. Anyone else who was ill must wait until the end of the rest day.

Verse 4 Jesus was going to use the rest day to do a good deed. They were already trying to find a reason to kill him.

Verse 5 Mark made it clear that Jesus was angry. Many people are angry for selfish reasons. They are angry when other people have not been kind to them. Jesus was angry because the *Pharisees were going to use the man as a way to oppose Jesus. They were showing no love towards a man who needed their sympathy. Jesus cured the man with a brief order.

Verse 6 The *Herodians were friends of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. Usually the *Pharisees hated the *Herodians because Herod's *disciples were friends with the *Romans. But both the *Pharisees and the *Herodians were afraid of Jesus. The *Pharisees thought that they might lose their *religious authority. The *Herodians thought that trouble with the *Romans would spoil their political ambitions. So the *Pharisees and the *Herodians joined together in order to oppose Jesus.

Jesus teaches by the lake 3:7-12

v7 Jesus went off to the Sea of Galilee with his *disciples. A large crowd from Galilee followed. **v8** Many people heard about all that Jesus was doing. So they came to him. They came from Judea, Jerusalem and Idumea. They came from the lands east of the River Jordan. They came from the area of Tyre and Sidon. **v9** Because of the crowd, Jesus told his *disciples to get a boat ready for him. Crowds of people were coming too close to Jesus. There was a danger that they would hurt him by their pressure. **v10** Jesus had cured many people. So all those with diseases were pushing forward in order to touch him. **v11** Whenever people with evil *spirits saw him, they fell down in front of him. They shouted, 'You are the Son of God.' **v12** But Jesus gave them a strict order not to tell who he was.

Verse 7 Jesus left the *Jewish meeting places because the *scribes were trying stop his work. He wanted to teach more people. So he chose the side of the lake as a place where he could teach.

Verse 8 The crowds came to him from beyond the region called Galilee. They travelled long distances from Jerusalem in the south, and from the region called Idumea even further south. People came from the *Gentile cities east of the Jordan. They even came from the foreign ports of Tyre and Sidon in the north.

Verses 9-10 The crowd was so large that it was difficult for Jesus to teach them. Also, people who wanted Jesus to cure them were trying to get near enough to touch him. Jesus was therefore in danger because the crowd were pressing against him. So he used a small boat a little way from the shore. Then everyone could see and hear him.

Verse 11 The men with evil *spirits knew that Jesus had a very close *relationship with God. They were afraid and they fell down in front of him.

Verse 12 It was too soon for people to know that Jesus was the *Messiah. They needed to know that Jesus brought freedom from *sin. They were hoping for a country free from *Roman rule. Jesus did not want people to think that a political *Messiah had arrived. There would have been trouble if people thought that. They would want him to lead them against the *Romans. So Jesus insisted that the men with evil *spirits should keep their knowledge secret.

Jesus chooses 12 *apostles 3:13-19

v13 Jesus went up into the hills. He called those that he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. **v14** He chose 12 men to be with him. He also wanted to send them out to *preach. **v15** And he wanted them to have authority to throw out evil *spirits. **v16** He chose Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter. **v17** He chose James and John, the sons of Zebedee. He gave them the name 'Boanerges'. Boanerges means 'Sons of *Thunder'. **v18** There were Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus. There were Thaddeus and Simon the Eager Man. **v19** Judas Iscariot was one of them. He was the person who handed Jesus over to his enemies.

Verse 13 Jesus knew that he must find a way for his work to continue. He went up into the hills in order to get away from the crowds. He needed to decide which of his *disciples he should teach in a special way. Luke says that he prayed all night (Luke 6:12).

Verses 14-15 There were 12 *tribes of the *Jews. Jesus chose 12 men to become the beginning of the new people of God, the church. They would be with Jesus. They would learn more about him and they would follow his example. They would learn his message so that they could tell other people. Then he would send them out with his authority. Jesus would give them the power to cure people that evil *spirits controlled.

None of those whom he chose was a rich person or an important person. Jesus chose ordinary people. But those people would become extraordinary because they had been with him.

Verse 16 Jesus gave Simon, who used to catch fish, the name 'Peter'. The name Peter means 'Rock'. He would become a person whom God could use. God would use him as people use a rock to build on (Matthew 16:18).

Verse 17 The two sons of Zebedee were very ready to give their opinions in a loud, angry way. So Jesus called them 'Sons of Thunder'. (Thunder is the loud noise that you may hear in a storm.)

Verse 18 Andrew was Simon's brother. Bartholomew is a surname. He was probably the same person as Nathanael, whom Philip knew (John 1:45). Bible students think that Thaddeus is the same person as Judas, son of James (Luke 6:16). Matthew had collected taxes for the *Romans. Mark calls Simon an 'Eager Man'. The Eager Men were a group who wanted to force out the *Romans. Matthew and Simon became friends because they both served Jesus.

Verse 19 Kerioth was a village in Judea. 'Iscaiot' may mean 'man from Kerioth'. If so, Judas was the only man of the 12 *disciples who did not come from Galilee.

Jesus and *Beelzebub 3:20-30

The *religious leaders say that Jesus is getting his power from *Satan.

v20 Then Jesus went into a house. A crowd gathered again. The crowd was so large that Jesus and his *disciples could not even find time to eat. **v21** When his friends heard it, they said, 'He is mad.' So they went to take care of him. **v22** Some *scribes were there who had come down from Jerusalem. They said, '*Beelzebub controls him. He throws out evil *spirits with the power of the prince of evil *spirits.' **v23** Jesus called them to him. He spoke to them in *parables. 'Surely *Satan cannot drive out *Satan. **v24** If a *kingdom fights against itself, it cannot remain. **v25** And if a family fights against itself, it cannot last. **v26** And if *Satan fights against himself, his power will be divided. And he will come to an end. **v27** But nobody can enter a strong man's house and steal his things. He must first tie up the strong man. Then he can steal from his house.

v28 I am telling you the truth. God will forgive everyone's *sins and the insults that they speak against him. **v29** But God can never forgive anyone who insults the *Holy Spirit. He is in danger of *eternal punishment.' **v30** The *scribes had said that Jesus had an evil *spirit. That is why Jesus said this.

Verses 20-21 Jesus' friends thought that a sensible person would not behave like Jesus. He had left the security of his home. He was getting into trouble with the *religious authorities. He was working so hard that he was even missing meals. They thought that he had gone mad. They must go to take him home.

Verse 22 *Beelzebub was the name of a false god in the *Old Testament (2 Kings 1:3). The *Jews used it as a name for *Satan. The *scribes did not deny that Jesus could free people from evil *spirits. But they said that he got this power from *Satan, the chief evil *spirit.

Verses 23-26 It would not be sensible for *Satan to fight against himself. Jesus showed that by what he said. If one part of a *kingdom fights against another part, the *kingdom will not last. If there are quarrels in a family, that family will suffer. If *Satan was fighting his own evil *spirits, he was destroying himself.

Verse 27 Nobody can steal from a strong man's house unless a stronger man first ties him up. *Satan was the 'strong man'. Jesus is more powerful than *Satan. Because he had defeated the evil *spirits, Jesus had begun to rob *Satan of his power.

Verses 28-30 Someone may decide to take no notice of his conscience. He knows that certain things are wrong. But he still does them. If he continues to do this, he will no longer be able to distinguish right things from wrong things. Isaiah spoke about people like that. He said that 'they call evil things good, and they call good things evil' (Isaiah 5:20). The *scribes had seen all the good things that Jesus had done. But they said that *Satan was giving him the power. So they were insulting the *Holy Spirit, who gave Jesus the power to do his work. God is willing to forgive almost anything. But he will not forgive someone who insults the *Holy Spirit.

The family of Jesus 3:31-35

Jesus shows his human family the nature of God's family.

v31 Jesus' mother and brothers came. They stood outside the house. They sent someone in to give him a message. **v32** A crowd was sitting round Jesus. They told him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside. They are asking for you.' **v33** Jesus replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' **v34** Jesus looked at the people who were sitting in a circle round him. He said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. **v35** Whoever obeys God is my brother and my sister and my mother.'

Verse 31 Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters (Mark 6:3). The brothers were probably the sons of Joseph and Mary that were born after Jesus, her 'first son' (Luke 2:7). Some Christians believe that Mary did not have any more children after Jesus. Some of them believe that the word 'brothers' may mean cousins or close relatives. And some of them believe that the word 'brothers' may mean the sons and daughters of Joseph by a former wife. If so, this wife died before Joseph married Mary.

Verses 33-35 Jesus was not saying that he did not care about his human family. The *Pharisees did not take responsibility for their parents. But Jesus told them that they were wrong about that (Mark 7:9-13). Even when he was hanging on the *cross, he was looking after his mother. He made sure that she had a home (John 19:26-27). But he has a much larger family. His brothers and sisters are all those who obey God. They are not relatives by birth. But they are part of God's family. So their *relationship with each other can be stronger than a *physical *relationship.

Chapter 4

Jesus teaches by means of *parables 4:1-34

- 1 The *parable of the four soils 4:1-9
- 2 Jesus explains the *parable 4:10-20
- 3 A collection of things that Jesus said 4:21-25
- 4 The *parable of the growing seed 4:26-29
- 5 The *parable of the tiny seed 4:30-32
- 6 Jesus' use of *parables 4:33-34

The *parable of the four soils 4:1-9

v1 Again Jesus began to teach at the side of the sea. A very large crowd gathered round him. So he got into a boat and he sat in it on the sea. The whole crowd was at the side of the sea, on the land. **v2** He taught them many things in *parables. This was one of them. **v3** 'Listen! A farmer went out to sow some seed. **v4** As he scattered the seed, some fell along the path. The birds came and they ate it up. **v5** Other seed fell on shallow soil with rock underneath. Immediately the seed sprang up, because the soil was not deep. **v6** When the sun came up, it burnt the plants. They dried up because they had no roots. **v7** Some seed fell among weeds. The weeds grew up and they stopped the plant from growing. It therefore could not yield any grain. **v8** Other seeds fell into good soil. They grew up. They yielded a crop 30, 60 or a hundred times as much as the seed that the farmer had planted.' **v9** And Jesus said, 'He who has ears should listen.'

Verses 3-4 Farmers used to scatter the seed by hand. Afterwards they would plough it in. People who used a path through a field would make the ground hard. Birds would quickly eat seeds that fell on top of the path.

Verses 5-6 Seeds could not make strong roots where there was only a thin amount of soil over the rock. They would grow, but the plants would be thin and weak. The hot sun would therefore destroy the weak young plants.

Verse 7 Weeds would use up the goodness in the soil. They would stop the light of the sun from reaching the plants. They would take up all the space. So the plants would not be able to grow enough to yield a crop.

Verse 8 Enough seed would fall on good ground to yield a harvest.

Verse 9 Jesus meant, 'You have ears to hear with. Listen carefully to what I am saying.'

Jesus explains the *parable 4:10-20

v10 When Jesus was alone, the 12 *disciples asked him about the *parables. So did the other *disciples round him. **v11** Jesus told them, 'You have received the secret of God's *kingdom. But I use *parables to tell everything to those outside. **v12** In this way they will see. But they will never know what they are seeing. They will hear, but they will not understand. Otherwise, they might change their ways and God might forgive them.' **v13** And he said to them, 'If you do not understand this *parable, you will never understand all the *parables. **v14** The farmer sows the word (God's message). **v15** The ones on the path mean people who hear God's message. But as soon as they hear it, *Satan at once takes away the message from their minds. **v16** In the same way, some seed fell on the shallow soil over rocks. That means other people who hear the message. They believe it immediately with joy. **v17** But their roots are not very deep. They last for a while. But when trouble or pain happen because of God's word, they lose their *faith. **v18** Other people are like the seeds among weeds. They hear and believe the message. **v19** But the worries of this life, the delight in wealth and the desire for other things come. They stop the message, so that their *faith never grows. So it never yields fruit. **v20** And there are those seeds that fall on the good soil. Those people hear the message and they believe it. They yield fruit, 30, 60 or even one hundred times as much as the farmer planted.'

Verses 10-11 Jesus contrasted his *disciples with other people. The truths of the *kingdom are 'secrets' because people cannot discover them for themselves. But some people are willing to believe. And God shows that Jesus is king to those people. The ordinary person would hear the story but he or she would not understand its meaning.

Verse 12 Jesus used words from Isaiah (6:9). People were 'blind' because of their prejudices. They were 'deaf' to the truth because they were not willing to change their ways. Those who sincerely want to obey God will think about the meaning of the *parables. They will understand the truths in them. Those who have no real desire to obey God will not understand. The *parable will hide the truth from them.

Verse 14 The 'farmer' means first of all Jesus himself. Then the farmer can mean anyone who tells people about the *gospel.

Verse 15 The 'seed' of God's message cannot enter the minds of people who are like the hard path. They have no interest at all in the *gospel. They do not realise how important it is.

Verses 16-17 Some people may accept what Jesus taught with joy. But, like a plant without deep roots, their *faith is not very strong. They do not let their *faith make a real difference to the way that they live. Problems and *temptations come. People insult or even attack them. Then their *faith dies like the plant in the hot sun.

Verses 18-19 Like tall weeds, there are many things that push out the life of *faith. They may be responsibilities, ambitions, the desire for money. Or they may be any of a wide variety of things that people enjoy doing. Some of these things are not wrong in themselves. But they can provide excuses to neglect the *spiritual life of prayer and *worship. They occupy so much time and attention that there is no space left for God.

Verse 20 Some people accept and believe the message. They are serious about their *faith and they produce the 'fruit' of a good life.

The *parable might cause people to think about their own 'soil'. Their attitude would show whether their *faith was genuine. The *parable would also encourage the *disciples. There would be a 'harvest' of those who believed Jesus and his *disciples. This was true even if some of their efforts seemed to have no good result. God's word would not 'return to him without succeeding' (Isaiah 55:11).

A collection of things that Jesus said 4:21-25

Mark groups together some of the things that Jesus said. In Matthew and Luke, they are separate from each other.

The lamp 4:21-22

v21 Jesus said to them, 'You do not bring in a lamp in order to put it under a large bowl or under a bed. You put it on something tall. **v22** One day, everyone will see clearly whatever people are hiding now. Every secret must come out into the light.'

Verse 21 A lamp would be of no use if people hid it under something. It should light up a room so that people can see. Jesus' *disciples must not hide their *faith. They must allow other people to see the 'light' of God's good news.

Verse 22 Men may try to cover up their actions, words and thoughts. But they will not be successful. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, but they failed (Genesis 3:8-9). In the end, God will bring everything into the 'light' of his judgement.

The result when people listen 4:23-25

v23 'Anyone who has ears must listen', he said. **v24** And he said to them, 'Be careful how you listen. You will get whatever you give. And you will receive even more. **v25** Because the person who has will receive more. But some people do not have much of anything. They will lose whatever they do have.'

Verses 23-24 People must listen so that they can understand. Then they should obey what Jesus taught. Then, they will be able to understand more of the truth.

Verse 25 For example, a man may play football or he may run fast. He becomes more skilful if he practises. But he loses his skill if he does not practise. Some people do not try to understand Jesus' *parables. In the end, they will lose the power to take any notice of them.

The *parable of the growing seed 4:26-29

This *parable is in Mark's *Gospel only.

v26 Jesus said, 'This is what the *kingdom of God is like. A farmer plants seeds in his field. **v27** He goes to sleep at night and he wakes up in the day. The seed begins to grow, but he does not know how. **v28** The earth produces fruit without help from anyone. First, there is the stem, then the part that will have seeds in, then all the seeds in that part. **v29** When the grain is ripe, the farmer cuts the corn at once. He cuts it because the time of harvest has come.'

Verses 26-28 A farmer can prepare the ground, but he cannot make the seed grow. He does not even understand how it grows. While he is carrying on his normal life, the seed is growing. *Disciples are like the farmer. They can work to give the 'seed' of God's message to other people. But it is God who works out his purpose. His purpose is to bring more people into his *kingdom. People think that the *kingdom grows slowly. But *disciples know that God will bring a harvest.

Verse 29 There is also a final harvest. It is God's day of judgement. Christians should wait for that time with patience and hope. They are like the farmer who is waiting for the harvest.

The *parable about the tiny seed 4:30-32

v30 Jesus said, 'It is hard to say what the *kingdom of God is like. It is hard to find a *parable to use for it.'

v31 It is like the tiny seed called mustard. It is the smallest of all seeds when you put it into the ground. **v32** But it grows up and it becomes the largest of all bushes. So even the birds can make nests in its shade.'

Verses 31-32 The mustard seed is very tiny. The *Jews spoke about it as the smallest seed. But it can grow into a very tall bush, more like a tree. The *kingdom of God began with few *disciples. But it has grown and it has become world-wide. A tree was picture language for a powerful nation. Many people will find safety in God's *Kingdom.

Jesus' use of *parables 4:33-34

v33 Jesus used many such *parables. He taught as much as the people were able to understand. **v34** He did not speak without *parables. But when he was alone with his *disciples, he explained the meaning to them.

Verse 33 Jesus used *parables so that people would think about the meaning of his words. He told stories that were suitable for the hearers.

Verse 34 The *disciples wanted to understand. Jesus could therefore help them to understand what he taught completely.

Four *miracles Chapter 4:35 - Chapter 5:34

Mark recorded four incidents that show the authority and power of Jesus:

- 1 The storm on the lake 4:35-41.
- 2 The mad man from Gerasa 5:1-20.
- 3 The daughter of Jairus 5:21-24; 35-43. This incident is in two parts.
- 4 The account of the woman who was bleeding (5:25-34). This account is between the two parts of the account of Jairus's daughter.

The storm on the lake 4:35-41

v35 That day, in the evening, Jesus said to his *disciples, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' **v36** So they left the crowd. They took him with them, exactly as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. **v37** A great storm of wind started and the waves came over the side into the boat. It was nearly full of water. **v38** But Jesus was in the back of the boat. He was asleep with his head on a cushion. They woke him up, and they said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care if we die?' **v39** Jesus woke and he gave a command to the wind, 'Be quiet!' And he said to the sea, 'Be still!' And the wind became less strong, and everything became very calm. **v40** Jesus said to them, 'There is no reason for you to be so afraid. You still do not seem to believe at all!' **v41** They felt fear and surprise. They said to each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

Verse 35 You hardly believe me at all! There is no reason for you to be so afraid Jesus had been so busy all day that he needed rest away from the crowds. The 'other side' means the east side of the lake.

Verse 36 Jesus had taught from a boat. The words 'exactly as he was' probably mean that Jesus did not leave that boat. The detail about the 'other boats' is in Mark's *Gospel only.

Verse 37 The lake is below sea level and there are mountains on both sides of it. The wind can rush down the valley without warning. And it can make the lake very dangerous. Some of the *disciples used to catch fish and so they knew about these sudden storms. They knew how easily the boat might sink. Then they would drown.

Verse 38 Jesus was so tired that he was asleep. He was not even aware of the storm until the frightened *disciples woke him.

Verse 39 Jesus gave orders that immediately brought calmness to the lake. The writer of the Psalms says that God makes the stormy sea calm (Psalm 89:9; 107:28-29). Jesus had shown his authority over nature in the same way as God who created everything. Jesus said that his *disciples 'still' did not seem to believe at all. He was sad. They had heard so much that he had said. And they had seen so many things that he had done. But they were still not able to trust him.

Jesus can bring calmness in the events in life that are like 'storms'. Christians often use this event in Matthew 4 to show that he can do that. Sudden *temptations, illness, family problems and political troubles are a great danger to a person's peace of mind. To have *faith in the care and power of Jesus is better than to worry and to be afraid.

Chapter 5

The man from Gerasa who had evil *spirits 5:1-20

v1 Jesus and the *disciples came to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They came to the territory of the people from Gerasa. **v2** As soon as Jesus came out of the boat, a man with an '*unclean' *spirit met him from among the graves. **v3** The man lived among the graves. Nobody could tie him up any longer, even with a chain. **v4** People had often bound him with chains on his hands and feet. But he tore the chains apart and he broke the chains on his feet into pieces. He was too strong for anyone to control him. **v5** All day and all night he wandered among the graves and through the hills. He was always screaming and cutting himself with stones.

v6 As soon as he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran to meet him. He went on his knees in front of Jesus. **v7** He screamed, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? In the name of God, do not make me suffer!' **v8** This was because Jesus had said, 'Evil *spirit, come out of this man!'

v9 Then Jesus asked the man, 'What is your name?' The man answered, 'My name is *Legion, because there are so many of us.' **v10** Then he asked Jesus again and again not to send the evil *spirits out of that region.

v11 There was a large number of pigs there. They were feeding themselves on the side of the hill. **v12** The evil *spirits urged Jesus, 'Send us to the pigs and let us go into them.' **v13** So Jesus allowed them to go. The evil *spirits came out of the man and they went into the pigs. All the pigs, about two thousand of them, rushed down the steep hill into the lake, and they drowned. **v14** The men who had looked after the pigs ran off. They spread the report of what had happened, in the town and the country. Then the people came out to see what had happened. **v15** They came to Jesus. Then they saw the man whom evil *spirits had controlled. He was sitting there with clothes on. He was completely normal. He was the same man who used to have the *legion of evil *spirits in him. The people were very frightened. **v16** Those who had seen the incident told the people about the man and about the pigs. **v17** Then the people began to urge Jesus to leave their neighbourhood.

v18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man kept on asking to go with Jesus. **v19** But Jesus would not let him. He said to the man, 'Go home to your family and friends. Tell them how much the *Lord has done for you. Tell them how he has had pity on you.' **v20** So the man went away. He began to tell all through the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. All the people who heard were astonished.

Verse 1 Jesus went to the east side of the lake. Some copies of Mark's book have 'Gergesenes' as a name for these people from Gerasa. And some copies have 'Gadarenes'.

Verse 2 The graves were caves among the rocks. People thought that evil *spirits lived among graves.

Verses 2-3 The details about the chains show how strong the mad man was. Mark perhaps wants to show that the power of Jesus to cure the man was much stronger. Perhaps that is why he includes these details.

Verse 5 The man could never stop to rest and he was a great danger to himself.

Verses 6-8 The man called Jesus 'the Son of the most high God'. He perhaps meant, 'You are the *Messiah.' The '*unclean' *spirits were afraid that Jesus was going to punish them. They recognised his power.

Verse 9 In those days (and even in some countries today), to know a person's name is to have some power over him. People also thought that nobody could send an evil *spirit out of a person unless they knew the evil *spirit's name. Perhaps Jesus asked the man's name to show that he wanted to help him. A '*legion' was a section of the *Roman army, of about 6000 soldiers. The man believed that many evil *spirits had gone into him. It is possible that *Roman soldiers had frightened the man in the past. This may have caused his very disturbed mental state.

Verses 10-13 Some people do not believe that evil *spirits exist. They think that the man's screams probably frightened the pigs. The men should have guarded the pigs. But the men were watching Jesus instead. So they could not stop the pigs from rushing down the hill into the lake.

Luke (8:31) says that the evil *spirits did not want Jesus to send them into the place for punishment. This is the place where God will put evil *spirits on the day of judgement. The evil *spirits were afraid that Jesus would punish them now. *Jews would not keep pigs. The law said that they must not eat pigs (Leviticus 11:7). The owners of the pigs would therefore have been *Gentiles. Some people blame Jesus because he allowed the death of 2000 pigs. They say that the owners had lost their way to earn money. But the healthy mind of a person is more important than money. The death of the pigs convinced the man that he was now free from control by evil *spirits.

Verse 15 The man was sitting as a *disciple would sit. He was waiting for Jesus to teach him.

Verse 17 The man was no longer a dangerous public nuisance. The people should have been happy for the man's return to health. But, instead, they were frightened. They did not want Jesus to disturb their lives any more. His power might affect them too much.

Verses 18-20 Jesus did not usually tell a person to speak about his healing. But Jesus was in 'Decapolis'. 'Decapolis' is a *Greek word that means 'Ten Towns'. They were cities east and south of the River Jordan, where Greek people had lived for about three hundred years. So Jesus was in *Gentile territory to which he would not return. Therefore there was no danger that crowds of *Jews would want to make Jesus king. Jesus sent the man to tell other people the good news. He would be a witness among *Gentiles to the saving power of Jesus. To explain the *miracle to other people would also make the man's own *faith stronger.

The daughter of Jairus, Part 1 5:21-24

v21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him. Jesus was at the side of the sea. **v22** Then one of the leaders of the *Jewish meeting place, whose name was Jairus, came to see Jesus. He fell at Jesus' feet. **v23** He asked Jesus to cure his little daughter. He said, 'She will die very soon. You can make her live. Please come and lay your hands on her.' **v24** Jesus went with him. A large number of people followed Jesus. They crowded round him.

Verse 22 Jairus was an important official. He was responsible to arrange all that happened in the meeting place. He would know about the *miracles that Jesus had performed in Capernaum. He would also know that many officials opposed Jesus. He therefore needed courage to approach Jesus in public. He had to forget his own importance. He was humble enough to go down at Jesus' feet. He loved his daughter. And that caused him to have the *faith to ask Jesus for help. Luke records that she was his only child. She was 12 years old (Luke 8:42).

The woman who was bleeding 5:25-34

v25 There was a woman in the crowd who had suffered for 12 years from an illness. The illness made her bleed. **v26** She had suffered much from many doctors. She had spent all her money to pay them. She was no better. Instead, her illness became worse. **v27** She had heard what people said about Jesus. She came up behind him in the crowd and she touched the edge of his clothing. **v28** She did this because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothing, I shall get better.' **v29** Immediately, she stopped bleeding. She could feel that she was well again. **v30** Jesus knew at once that power had gone out from him. He turned round in the crowd and he asked, 'Who touched my clothing?' **v31** His *disciples said, 'You can see that everyone is crowding round you. And you still ask, "Who touched me?"' **v32** But Jesus kept looking round to see who had touched him. **v33** Then the woman came and she fell at Jesus' feet. She knew what had happened to her. She was trembling with fear. But she told Jesus what she had done. **v34** Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, your *faith has made you well. Go in peace. You are free from your illness.'

Verses 25-26 Because her illness made her bleed, the woman was '*unclean' (Leviticus 15:25-27). This meant that she could not take part in *worship in the *Jewish meeting place. People would avoid her, so she would be lonely. She had tried to get help from doctors. But they had not been able to cure her. All her money had gone and her illness was worse.

Verses 27-28 It would have been difficult for her to ask Jesus for help in public. She did not want to touch Jesus himself. Her illness made her *unclean. And anyone whom she touched would also become *unclean. So she touched the edge of his clothing.

Verse 30 Jesus knew that someone had touched him in a special way. When he cured people, Jesus felt some power go from him to them.

Verses 31-32 Jesus insisted on finding out who had touched him. The person might feel guilty about a secret touch that would make Jesus '*unclean'. The illness might not have ended completely.

Verse 33 Perhaps the woman was afraid that Jesus would be angry with her. She believed that Jesus was able to cure people. But she did not know his love. To speak about what had happened to her would be difficult in front of so many people.

Verse 34 Jesus called her 'daughter'. This was a kind word. It meant that she was no longer *unclean. She belonged with all the other people who believed in Jesus, and in God as their Father.

He said that her *faith had made her well. It was not some kind of magic in the edge of his clothing. Jesus told her to 'go in peace'. Then, the woman knew that her illness had gone completely. Other people could accept her again. She had told Jesus everything. So she could also go and not feel guilty.

The daughter of Jairus, Part 2 5:35-43

v35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus. 'Your daughter is dead', they said. 'There is no need to bother the teacher any more.' **v36** But Jesus did not take any notice of them. He told Jairus, the ruler of the *Jewish meeting place, 'Do not be afraid. Just believe.' **v37** Jesus let only Peter, James, and John the brother of James, follow him. **v38** They came to the home of the ruler of the meeting place. There, Jesus saw a lot of confusion. People were making loud crying and weeping noises. **v39** When Jesus had gone inside, he said, 'You should not be making all this confusion and you should not weep. The child is not dead. She is only sleeping.' **v40** They all laughed at him. But Jesus made them all go outside. He took only the child's father and mother and the *disciples who were with him. He went to where the child was. **v41** He took her by the hand. Then he said to her, 'Talitha cumi!' This means, 'Little girl, get up!' **v42** Immediately, the girl got up and she walked about. She was 12 years old. They were completely astonished. **v43** Jesus gave them strict orders. They must not tell anyone what had happened. And he told the parents to give her something to eat.

Verses 35-36 The news from Jairus's home might have made him stop hoping. But Jesus told him to believe that all would be well.

Verse 37 This was the first time that Jesus gave Peter, James and John a special place in his work.

Verse 38 It was usual for people to cry in a very noisy way after someone had died. There were people whom the family paid to weep over the body. The family would not have respected the dead person if they did not pay people to weep.

Verse 39 Some people think that the girl was only unconscious. But Jesus spoke about death as 'sleep'. He did so, when Lazarus had died (John 11:11-13). *New Testament letters also describe the death of Christians as sleep (1 Corinthians 15:16, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). Christians later called the place where they had their graves a 'cemetery'. This name comes from a *Greek word that means 'place to sleep'.

Verse 40 They laughed at Jesus. This also helps to show that the girl was dead. Jesus sent away all those people who would disturb and frighten the girl.

Verse 41 Jesus called the girl as her mother might have done to wake her in the morning. The words, 'Talitha cumi' are *Aramaic. Peter, who was there, remembered the actual words of Jesus. Mark recorded them and then he explained them in *Greek. Peter used similar words and actions in Acts 9:40. Then, a dead woman came back to life by the power of Jesus, which was working by Peter.

Verse 43 Jesus' command was practical. Something to eat would give the girl strength after her illness. The parents needed something to do in order to bring life back to normal for themselves and their daughter. He ordered them not to tell anyone. They must now give all their attention to their daughter. This would also protect her from too much attention from crowds that might have gathered near the house.

Jesus had therefore shown his authority over nature (4:35-41), over evil *spirits (5:1-20), over illness (5:25-34) and over death (5:21-24, 35-43). In all four incidents, he removed fear and, with only a brief order, he gave peace immediately.

Chapter 6

The people in Nazareth refuse to accept Jesus 6:1-6

v1 Jesus went away from there and he came to his own home town called Nazareth. His *disciples went with him. **v2** On God's rest day, he began to teach in the *Jewish meeting place. Many people who heard him were astonished. They asked, 'Where did this man get all of this from? What is this wisdom that he has received? What *miracles he does! **v3** He is only the *carpenter. He is Mary's son, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. His sisters live here among us.' They were offended and they refused to believe him. **v4** Jesus said to them, 'A *prophet receives honour everywhere except in his own town, among his own relatives, or in his own home!' **v5** Jesus could not do any *miracles there. He was only able to lay his hands on a few sick people and cure them. **v6** Jesus was astonished by their lack of *faith. Then Jesus went out from village to village and he was teaching the people.

Verse 1 Jesus went from Capernaum to his home town, Nazareth. He was not just on a private visit to his family. His *disciples were with him. So he went in order to teach.

Verses 2-3 The people in Nazareth recognised that he was wise. And they recognised that he could perform *miracles. But they could not believe that he came with God's message. He was only the *carpenter. The word that we have translated '*carpenter' is the *Greek word 'tekton'. It means more than someone who worked with wood. A 'tekton' was a skilled man. A 'tekton' could build or repair anything. God, when he came to earth, became a real human person. He worked with his hands, as most people did. But Jesus had worked among them. So the people thought that he could not be anyone special.

The people in Nazareth also knew Jesus' family. They called Jesus 'Mary's son'. They do not refer to Joseph, so he had probably already died. There is a note about Jesus' brothers and sisters after Mark 3:31. James began to believe in Jesus after the *resurrection. He became a leader of the Christians in Jerusalem.

The people may have been jealous of Jesus. They also thought that God could not work in a special way by means of someone like him. That was because they knew him.

Verse 4 People did not respect *prophets who lived among them. Jesus reminded them about that. Even now, it may be difficult to accept as important someone who is familiar.

Verse 5 Jesus could not do any *miracles there. This does not mean that he had no power. But not even Jesus could help people who were not willing to trust and obey him.

Verse 6 The people refused to believe that Jesus came from God. Jesus was astonished about that. Jesus was inviting them to enter his *kingdom. Their prejudice prevented them from accepting his invitation.

Jesus sends out the 12 *disciples 6:7-13

v7 Jesus called the 12 men to him. He began to send them out in pairs. He gave them authority over evil *spirits. **v8** He ordered them to take nothing for the journey except a stick to help them walk. They must not take any food, a traveller's bag or any money in their belts. **v9** He told them to wear shoes but not to take an extra shirt. **v10** He said, 'When you enter a house, stay there. Stay there until you leave the place. **v11** Some places may not give you a welcome or listen to you. Then, when you leave, shake the dust from your feet. That will be evidence against them.' **v12** So they went out. And they *preached that people should *repent. **v13** They threw out many evil *spirits. They put oil on many sick people's bodies and cured them.

Verse 7 'Began to' means that Jesus sent out the 12 *disciples on more than one occasion. Because they went in pairs, the *disciples could encourage each other (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). They could help each other, especially when people would not listen to them.

Verse 8 They had to trust God for all that they needed. The traveller's bag might be a bag in which to take food for a few days. It might mean a bag to collect money in. The *disciples were going to give people good news. They should not ask for people's money. They should not take any money with them. People made a pocket by pulling up their clothing over their belt. And they kept their money in that.

Verse 10 It was a duty for people to invite strangers into their homes. So the *disciples would receive a place to stay. But they must not waste time by moving from house to house. They must give all their attention to the people in the place where they were guests. They must not move to a place where there might be better food or more comfort.

Verse 11 They must not waste their time on people who would not give them a welcome. *Jews who returned from a *Gentile town or country would shake the dust from their feet. This was a custom to show that they separated themselves from *Gentile ideas. The *disciples must do this. They were separating themselves from anyone who refused to believe God's message. The *disciples were responsible to give people the opportunity to believe the good news. It was not their fault if anyone refused to believe their message.

Verse 12 The *disciples urged people to turn away from wrong behaviour and to come into God's *kingdom.

Verse 13 They also helped people to become well in mind and body. They gave people freedom from fear when they sent evil *spirits out of them. People used oil to cure an injury. The *disciples put oil on sick people in order to cure them. James tells the leaders of a Christian church to pray for a sick person. He tells them to put oil on the person (James 5:13-14).

Herod and John the *Baptist 6:14-29

v14 King Herod heard about this, because Jesus' name was now well-known. Some people were saying, 'John the *Baptist has come back from death. That is why Jesus has the power to do *miracles.' **v15** But other people said, 'It is Elijah.' Other people said, 'He is a *prophet. He is like one of the *prophets of a long time ago.' **v16** But when Herod heard about all this, he said, 'I cut John's head off. He has come back from death.' **v17** Herod had given orders to arrest John. He made his soldiers tie John up. And they put John in prison. Herod did this because he had married Herodias. She was the wife of his brother Philip. **v18** And John had said, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.' **v19** Herodias was still angry with John and she wanted to kill him. But she could not succeed, **v20** because Herod was afraid of John. He knew that John was a holy man. And John did what was right. So Herod kept him safe. When Herod heard him, he was very confused. But he liked to listen to John.

v21 But the opportunity for Herodias came when Herod gave a big party on his birthday. He invited his officials, army leaders and the important men in Galilee. **v22** Herodias's daughter came in and she danced. She pleased Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, 'Ask me for anything that you would like. And I will give it to you.' **v23** And he made a very serious promise, 'I will give you whatever you ask me for. I will give you up to half of my *kingdom!' **v24** She went out and she said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She answered, 'The head of John the *Baptist.' **v25** At once the girl rushed back to ask the king. She said, 'I want you to give me immediately the head of John the *Baptist on a plate.' **v26** The king was very sorry. But because of his serious promise in front of his guests, he did not like to refuse her. **v27** So the king sent a palace guard with orders to bring John's head. The soldier went to the prison and he cut off John's head. **v28** He brought John's head back on a plate and he gave it to the girl. She gave it to her mother. **v29** John's *disciples heard what had happened. So they came and they took his body. They laid it in a special cave, called a tomb.

Verse 14 Herod was Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. He ruled Galilee and Perea. Although Mark calls him 'king', the *Romans would not let Herod use that word about himself.

Verse 15 People believed that Elijah would come to announce the arrival of the *Messiah (Malachi 4:5). Some people believed that Jesus was a *prophet. He spoke with authority. He was therefore like the *Old Testament *prophets.

Verse 16 Public opinion had confused Herod. He also had a guilty conscience. He had ordered the death of John. He worried that Jesus might be John, alive again. Later he had an opportunity to see Jesus. Pilate had to decide whether Jesus was guilty. He sent Jesus to Herod so that he could help him to decide (Luke 23:6-12).

Verses 17-19 Herod had first married the daughter of king Aretas, who ruled a country in Arabia (2 Corinthians 11:32). But he left her and he married Herodias. She was the wife of his half brother Philip. They were both sons of Herod the Great but they had different mothers. Salome was the daughter of Herodias. John had said that Herod was wrong to marry Herodias. She could not forgive John for that. She wanted Herod to kill John. She persuaded Herod to put John in prison at the castle of Machaerus near the Dead Sea.

Verse 20 Herod was afraid of John, but he respected him. He recognised that John was a good man. He hated John's message, but he could not stop listening to John. He tried to protect him from the anger of Herodias.

Verses 21-22 Herodias encouraged Salome to dance alone in front of Herod and his guests. It is possible that he had drunk too much wine. He promised Salome anything that she asked for. He did not think about what she might ask.

Verse 23 He could not give Salome 'half his *kingdom', because he only ruled with the authority of the *Romans. But he made his promise sound very serious.

Verses 24-25 Herodias now had her opportunity to murder John. The girl asked for John's head 'immediately'. She wanted it at once. She did not want Herod to have time to change his mind.

Verse 26 Usually it is right to *keep a promise. But Herod's promise had been a foolish one. So it would have been right not to do it. But he was afraid that his guests would laugh at him. So he was too proud to refuse. And so he made his soldiers kill John.

Jesus feeds five thousand men 6:30-44

v30 The *apostles returned to Jesus. They told him all that they had done. And they told him all that they had taught. **v31** Jesus said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place. Then you can have a rest.' Many people were coming and going. That is why he said that. Jesus and the *disciples did not even have a chance to eat. **v32** So they went away in the boat to a quiet place. **v33** But many people saw them leave and they recognised them. They ran from all the towns and they arrived there before Jesus and the *disciples. **v34** When Jesus came to the shore, he saw a great crowd. They were like sheep without anyone to look after them. So he felt a great pity for them. So he began to teach them many things. **v35** When it was late in the day, his *disciples came to Jesus. They said, 'This is a lonely place. It is already very late. **v36** Send the people away so that they can buy something to eat in the country and the villages round here.' **v37** But Jesus answered his *disciples, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to Jesus, 'Shall we go and spend six months' pay on bread for them?' **v38** Jesus said, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five loaves and two fish'. **v39** Then Jesus ordered them to make the people sit down on the green grass. **v40** So they sat down in groups of 100 and groups of 50. **v41** Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up to heaven and he gave thanks for them. He broke the loaves into pieces. And he gave them to the *disciples to give to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. **v42** Everyone ate until they had enough. **v43** The *disciples collected 12 baskets full of the broken pieces of bread and fish that remained. **v44** The number of men who had eaten was five thousand.

Verse 30 Mark calls the 12 men '*apostles' for the first time here.

Verses 30-31 The *disciples were tired. And they wanted to tell Jesus all that had happened to them on their journey. But the crowds of people prevented them. They did not even have time for a meal. Jesus suggested that they should cross the lake by boat. They would then have some quiet and rest.

Verse 33 To cross the lake by boat might take a long time. It might take more time than to run round to the other side. So the people arrived before Jesus and the *disciples.

Verse 34 Sheep without anyone to look after them soon wander away from the right path. These people did not have a leader to stop them wandering away from God. They needed someone to teach them the right way to live. A man who looks after sheep is called a 'shepherd'. The *religious leaders were like those leaders that Ezekiel described. They were like bad shepherds who did not take care of their sheep (Ezekiel 34:4-6). But Jesus is the good shepherd who cares about his sheep (John 10:11). So Jesus had great pity for the crowd. They had stopped his plan for a rest. But he was willing to teach them.

Verse 37 The *disciples were astonished that Jesus should ask them to provide food for the hungry crowd. Someone calculated that they would need more than two hundred days wages for that. Mark does not tell us who calculated that. John records that it was Philip (John 6:7).

Verse 38 It was Andrew who found the food. John also tells us that. A boy had five loaves and two fish (John 6:9). Jesus broke the fish (Luke 9:16). So we think that they may have been dried fish.

Verse 39 Jesus gave them a command. That command would make it easy for the *disciples to give out the food. The people had to sit in groups on the 'green' grass. The only time that the grass was green would be in the spring, in April. John said that this event happened near the time of the *Jewish *Passover. The *Passover *feast was in the spring (John 6:4-14).

Verse 40 The *Greek word that we have translated as 'groups' described rows of vegetables in a garden. Peter probably told Mark his memory of what the people looked like on the 'green' grass.

Verse 41 Jesus gave thanks to God for the food. *Jews always thanked God before a meal for providing the food.

Verses 42-43 The very small amount of food became enough for the crowd of over five thousand people to have plenty to eat. There were even 12 baskets of pieces left over. There was enough for each of the 12 *disciples to fill one basket each.

This event is in all four *Gospels. The writers believed that it was important.

Some people try to deny that Jesus created more food by a *miracle. They say that one boy offered his small supply. And then, all the people began to share their food. But everyone had plenty to eat and there were 12 baskets left over. Every year, God supplies the harvest. What happened here was the harvest *miracle in a short time. God's provision of food is plentiful. But often some people are hungry because some other people are greedy.

The *Jews believed that the *Messiah would feed them with 'bread from heaven'. In Moses' time, God had fed the *Jewish people in the desert. Then, they were on their way to the country that he had promised to them (Exodus 16:14-18). Jesus had fed the crowd in a desert place. So, they believed that he was the *Messiah. He was bringing the 'promised country' of a *kingdom where they would share in the *Messiah's splendid dinner. So they tried to make Jesus king (John 6:14-15).

At the Last Supper, Jesus 'broke the bread' as he had broken the loaves on this occasion (verse 41). The Christian Church has always remembered what Jesus did at the Last Supper. Different churches call it different names, for example: the *Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Breaking of Bread. It is called 'the breaking of bread' in Acts (2:42; 20:7) and in Paul's letter (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24). At such times, Christians remember that Christ himself is the 'Bread'. He gives *spiritual life. He helps that *spiritual life to become stronger, as bread helps us to grow in a *physical way.

Jesus walks on the water 6:45-52

v45 Immediately, Jesus made his *disciples get into the boat. He made them go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he sent the crowd away. **v46** When he had left his *disciples, he went up into the hills. He went into the hills in order to pray. **v47** When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake. Jesus was alone on land. **v48** It was very difficult for the *disciples to use their oars. Jesus saw that. This was because the wind was blowing against them. About the fourth period in the night, Jesus came to them. He was walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them. **v49** But the *disciples saw Jesus as he was walking on the lake. And they thought that it was a *spirit. They cried out. **v50** They were all very frightened when they saw him. But at once Jesus said to them, 'Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.' **v51** He got into the boat with them. The wind stopped. They were completely astonished. **v52** This was because they had not understood the *miracle of the loaves. They had not learned anything when Jesus fed the 5000 men. They could not understand who Jesus was.

Verse 45 Jesus saw that the crowd were preparing to make him king. He did not want his *disciples to share in a popular effort to lead the nation against the *Romans. So he sent them away.

Jesus needed to pray. He had many problems. The *religious leaders opposed him. Herod Antipas was a cruel man who was afraid of Jesus. Now there were the people who wanted to make him a national leader. Again Jesus had to refuse the *temptation to choose power rather than love. He did not want the crowds to stop him giving people freedom from *sin.

Verse 48 The *Jewish night had four periods. They began at six o'clock in the evening. They were three hours each. Jesus came in the fourth period, about three o'clock in the early morning. It was near the time of *Passover, when the whole of the moon would be shining. So there was probably some light from the moon on the lake. Jesus could therefore see that the *disciples were struggling against a strong wind to reach the other side.

Verse 50 The *Greek words that we have translated 'It is I' mean 'I am'. It is possible that Mark used the name of God here (Exodus 3:14). He was reminding his readers that Jesus has the same power as God. God 'walks on the waves of the sea' (Job 9:8).

Verses 51-52 The *disciples were no longer afraid when Jesus came into the boat. But they were confused. They had not understood from the *miracle of the loaves who Jesus was. They were not able to recognise that his power over nature was the power of God.

This incident encourages Christians who are in any kind of trouble. They may believe, like the *disciples in the boat, that they are struggling alone. But Jesus came to the *disciples in their difficulty. Christians should remember that Jesus is with them. Then Jesus will give peace to them too.

The crowds want Jesus to help them 6:53-56

v53 They crossed over the lake and they landed at Gennesaret. They tied up the boat. **v54** As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised Jesus. **v55** They rushed round the whole of that area and they began to carry sick people to him on their mats. People were telling them where Jesus was. And they brought the sick people to that place. **v56** Jesus went into villages, towns and the country. Wherever he went, people laid their sick friends in the market places. They kept asking Jesus to let them touch just the edge of his clothing. All the people who touched it became well again.

Verse 53 Gennesaret was a small plain on the west side of the lake. It was south of Capernaum. So the wind had probably made the *disciples land away from their usual landing place.

Verse 56 Jesus cured a sick woman (5:25-34). He knew that power had gone from him. She had touched the edge of his clothing. Here many other people did the same.

Chapter 7

The Law and tradition 7:1-23

v1 The *Pharisees and some of the experts on the law who came from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus. **v2** They noticed that some of Jesus' *disciples did not wash their hands in the special *Jewish way before a meal. **v3** (The *Jews, and especially the *Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their hands. In this way they obey the old traditions. **v4** When they come from the market place, they always wash themselves before a meal. They obey many other traditions, such as the ceremony of washing cups, jugs and kettles.) **v5** The *Pharisees and the *scribes asked Jesus, 'Why do your *disciples not live in the way that our *ancestors taught us? Why do they eat when they have not carried out the hand washing ceremony?' **v6** Jesus replied, 'You are not honest! Isaiah *prophesied about you. He said, "These people give me honour by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me. **v7** Their *worship does not mean anything. They teach rules that men have made up instead of God's rules" (Isaiah 29:13). **v8** You take no notice of God's commands. You obey rules that men have made up.' **v9** Jesus then said to them, 'You have a good way not to obey God's law in order to obey your own tradition! **v10** Moses said, "Give honour to your father and mother" and, "You must kill anyone who says evil things about his father or mother." **v11** But you allow a man to say to his parents, "Any help that you might have received from me is 'Corban'. (That means 'I have given it to God'.)" **v12** So you do not allow him to do anything for his father or mother. **v13** In this way, you make God's law have no effect because of the traditions that you obey. And you do many other things like that.'

v14 Then Jesus called the people close to him again. He said to them, 'Listen, all of you, and understand this. **v15** Nothing that goes into a man from outside will make him *unclean. What comes out of a man makes him *unclean.' [**v16** 'You have ears to hear with. Make sure that you listen.'] **v17** When Jesus had gone into the house, away from the crowd, the *disciples asked him about this *parable. **v18** Jesus said, 'You do not seem to understand, either. What you eat cannot make you *unclean. You should be able to see that. **v19** Food does not go into the mind. It only goes into the stomach and it passes out of the body.' (By saying this, Jesus was calling all food clean.) **v20** 'But what comes out of a man makes him *unclean. **v21** Evil thoughts come from the inside, from man's mind. So do wrong sex behaviour, murder and *adultery. **v22** Stealing, wicked actions, cheating and desires that are not pure come from inside people too. So does the desire for what other people have, lies about other people, pride and foolish behaviour. **v23** All these evil things come from inside a man and they make him *unclean!'

Verses 2-4 The *disciples did not have dirty hands. Mark explained it for his *Gentile readers. The *Jews had a special way to wash their hands before a meal. It was not in order to remove dirt. It was a ceremony. It made sure that they had separated themselves from anything '*unclean'. Certain foods were '*unclean'. *Gentiles were '*unclean'. The *Jews had to pour water over each hand in a special way. And they had to wash each hand with the fist of the other hand. They did this when they came in from the town. They might have touched something that a *Gentile had touched. They were also very careful to wash anything that they drank from. They washed equally carefully anything that they used to prepare a meal.

Verses 6-7 Jesus said that they were not honest. Many translations use the word 'hypocrites' here. This means that they are like actors. They are hiding their real character. They said that they were obeying God's laws. But they were failing to obey God's laws. And they were expecting everyone to follow their traditions. Jesus used the words of Isaiah to emphasise that their religion was only a show on the outside. They were not sincere, because they put their own ideas in place of God's laws.

Verse 9 Jesus said that they had a 'good' way not to obey God's law. He was expressing his disgust when he said that. He meant that they were clever at following their own rules instead of God's rules.

Verses 10-13 Jesus gave an example of their wrong attitude. The word 'Corban' means a gift that someone has promised to God. A man could say that some of his money was 'Corban'. He could give it to *Temple funds or he could use it for himself. But nobody else could benefit from it. When his parents needed his help, he would make this excuse. So he avoided his duty to his parents in order to follow a tradition. He was therefore not obeying the command of God to give honour to his father and mother.

Jesus said that they had other ways not to obey God's laws. They did it in order to obey their own rules.

Verses 14-15 Jesus wanted the people to realise that the *Pharisees' idea of *unclean was wrong. The *Pharisees thought that in order to be holy they must obey special rules about washing. That was wrong. God wanted people to have good thoughts and to obey his laws.

Verse 16 is only in some copies of Mark's book. It repeats what Jesus had said after the *parable of the four soils (4:3-9).

Verses 18-19 Food goes through a man's body in the usual way. It goes into his mouth, then into his stomach and, in the end, it passes out again. So it cannot make him '*unclean' with God because it does not affect his thoughts and actions. Jesus meant that 'things' cannot be *unclean. It is people who become *unclean. They become *unclean because of their own actions.

The *Pharisees refused to eat certain food. They believed that this could make them holy. They must not eat with *Gentiles. Mark writes a note to say that Jesus was making foods 'clean'. Jesus showed that *sin begins with a person's thoughts. It would be possible to be holy without worrying about the right kind of food. Later, Peter learned something about food: The food that he ate made no difference to his *relationship with God. He could even visit a *Gentile and he could share a meal with him (Acts 10:9-29).

Verse 21 'Evil thoughts' produce evil actions. 'Wrong sex behaviour' means every kind of wrong sex act. '*Adultery' is a particular kind of wrong sex behaviour. It is when one person has sex with another person's wife or husband. Herod Antipas was guilty of '*adultery' when he took his brother Philip's wife.

Verse 22 'Cheating' means when a person does not speak the truth. He loses the confidence of other people. 'The desire for what other people have' makes a person unhappy. The '*unclean' person is not pleased about other people's happiness or success. Instead, the '*unclean' person hates them.

'Pride'. A proud man thinks that he is better than anyone else. He cannot see it when he is wrong. He even expects God to respect him. But God 'opposes proud people' (James 4:6).

'Foolish behaviour'. This can mean to spend time on activities that have no worth. But some people do wrong things whenever they want to. The words 'foolish behaviour' describe the actions of those people also.

Verse 23 All these evil actions come from what a man thinks about. Paul told the Christians at Philippi to think about what is pure and right (Philippians 4:8).

Jesus cures the daughter of a *Gentile 7:24-30

v24 Jesus left there. And he went away to the region called Tyre and Sidon. He went into a house, and he did not want anyone to know about it. But they could not keep it a secret. **v25** Immediately, a woman whose daughter had an '*unclean *spirit heard about him. She came and she fell at Jesus' feet. **v26** The woman was a *Gentile. She was born in Syro-Phoenicia. She asked Jesus to send the evil *spirit out of her daughter. **v27** Jesus said to her, 'First of all, the children must have their food. One should not take food from the children and throw it to the *dogs. That is not right.' **v28** But she answered Jesus, 'That is true, *Lord. But even the *dogs under the table eat the bits of bread that the children throw away.' **v29** Jesus said to her, 'Because of what you have said, go on your way. The evil *spirit has gone out of your daughter!' **v30** And she went home. And she found that the child was lying in bed. The evil *spirit had gone.

Verse 24 Jesus went north, probably in order to obtain some peace and quiet. He had made many enemies in Galilee, and the crowds were always demanding his help. Tyre and Sidon were two important harbours north of Capernaum. They were not on the Sea of Galilee. They were on the Mediterranean Sea.

Verse 27 Jesus' answer to the woman sounds like an insult. 'Dog' was a word that people used as an insult. The *Jews sometimes called *Gentiles '*dogs'. But Jesus did not use the usual word for wild, dirty *dogs. He used a word that describes a family pet. The kind of voice that Jesus used would also make a difference. He was probably smiling as he spoke. He said that the children must have their food first. He meant his own people, the *Jews, must receive the first offer of the *gospel.

Verse 28 People threw bread that they did not want to the family pets. Perhaps the woman could get the pieces that the children had thrown away. That is what she thought.

Verse 29 Jesus was pleased with the *faith that she had shown in her reply. Jesus was at a distance and he could not see the woman's daughter. But she became well. Jesus cured a *Roman soldier's servant without going to see him. Luke records that (Luke 7:1-10).

Jesus began his work among the *Jews. He would reach the *Gentiles by means of the *Jews. The woman was a sign of the *Gentiles who would accept the *gospel. They would believe the *gospel that most *Jews refused. Mark had described how Jesus removed the difference between 'clean' and '*unclean' food (7:14-23). In this incident, he removed the difference between *Jew and *Gentile, between 'clean' and '*unclean' people.

Jesus cures a deaf man 7:31-37

v31 Jesus left Tyre and he went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, and the region of the Ten Towns. **v32** They brought a man to Jesus. The man was deaf and he could not speak clearly. They asked Jesus to lay his hands on him. **v33** Jesus took him away from the crowd to a private place. He put his fingers in the man's ears. He touched the man's tongue with liquid from his mouth. **v34** He looked up to heaven. He sighed and he said to him, 'Ephphatha'. That means 'Be open!' **v35** He could hear. His tongue became free and he could speak clearly. **v36** Jesus told the people not to tell anyone. But the more he told them not to, the more they spread the news. **v37** They were completely astonished. They said, 'Everything that he does is wonderful. He even cures those who are deaf and dumb.'

Verse 31 Jesus made a long journey back to Galilee. It may have taken several months. He may have used the time to teach his *disciples.

Verse 32 Because the man was deaf, he had not learnt to speak clearly.

Verse 33 Jesus took him away to a quiet place. When a deaf person starts to hear again, every sound seems very loud. It would not be pleasant for the man if he were in a noisy crowd. So Jesus thought about how the man would feel. Jesus showed the man what he was going to do. He touched the man's ears. *Jewish doctors used liquid from their mouths. They believed that it could cure people. Jesus touched the man's tongue. Then the man would know that Jesus would make a difference to his speech. Jesus showed where the power to cure would come from. He looked up to heaven. 'Ephphatha' was an *Aramaic word. Mark explained it in *Greek.

Verse 36 The people did not obey Jesus. So, it was difficult for him to have the peace to train his *disciples.

Verse 37 Jesus made the words of Isaiah come true. Isaiah said that, when God comes to rescue his people,

'He will open the ears of those who cannot hear.

And those who cannot speak will shout for joy' (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Chapter 8

Jesus feeds four thousand people 8:1-10

v1 During that time, another large crowd had gathered. They did not have anything to eat. So Jesus called his *disciples to come to him. He said to them, **v2** 'I feel sorry for the people. They have been with me for three days. And now they do not have anything that they can eat. **v3** If I send them away to their homes hungry, they will grow weak. Some of them have come a long way.' **v4** The *disciples asked Jesus, 'Where can anyone find enough food to feed them in a desert place like this?' **v5** Jesus asked them, 'How much food have you got?' They answered, 'Seven loaves'. **v6** Jesus ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and he gave thanks to God. He broke them. Then he gave them to the *disciples to distribute among the people. **v7** They also had a few small fish. Jesus gave thanks for these, too. He told the *disciples to share these among the people, too. **v8** They all ate and they all had plenty. The *disciples picked up seven baskets full of the pieces that were left over. **v9** There were about four thousand people there. Jesus sent them away. **v10** Immediately, Jesus got into a boat with his *disciples. And he went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Verse 1 Jesus was in the region of the Ten Towns. He had told the man from Gerasa to go back. He told him to tell his own people how God had cured him (5:18-20). A crowd had gathered. Some people in that crowd may have been there because of what the man had told them. Other people may have been there because they had heard about the healing of the deaf man.

Verses 2-3 Jesus looked after the body as well as the *soul. He thought about the difficulty for hungry people if they had to go a long way.

Verse 4 The *disciples thought about the practical difficulty. They did not know how they could provide food in such a place. There was no food there. They had forgotten about the five thousand people whom Jesus fed. They still did not trust Jesus.

Although this is a similar story to the one in Mark 6, there are several differences. The crowd had been with Jesus for 'three' days. There were 'seven' loaves and 'seven' baskets. The word for basket (verse 8) is different. In Mark 6:43, 'kophinos' described a basket in which a *Jew carried his food. In this account, the word 'sphuris' means a much larger basket, which *Gentiles used. In Mark 6, Jesus was in Galilee, among *Jews. Here, Jesus was in the *Gentile territory of the Ten Towns.

Mark's *Gentile readers in Rome would have liked this story. Jesus looked after the *physical health of *Gentiles as well. He did not only look after the health of the *Jews.

The *Pharisees demand a sign 8:11-13

v11 The *Pharisees came and they began to ask Jesus questions. They wanted to test him. So they asked him for a sign from heaven. **v12** Jesus gave a deep sigh and he said, 'You people should not keep demanding a sign. I tell you the truth. I will not give the people of this time any sign.' **v13** He left them. He got back into the boat and he crossed to the other side of the lake.

Verse 11 Jesus had already given signs that his authority came from God. The *Pharisees refused to believe who Jesus was. They said that his power came from *Beelzebub (Mark 3:22). They wanted him to perform something astonishing.

Verse 12 Whatever Jesus did would not convince them. He knew that. They could not see the truth, because they had decided not to believe him. They were the same as the *Jewish people who left Egypt. They tested God and they refused to obey him. They, too, had seen many *miracles before they escaped (Psalm 95:9-10).

Jesus gave a 'deep sigh'. It shows how sad he was. He wanted people to have *faith in him.

*Spiritually and *physically blind people 8:14-26

Mark has recorded two incidents about blind people:

- 1 The *disciples are blind *spiritually, verses 14-21.
- 2 Jesus cures a man who is *physically blind, verses 22-26.

The *disciples 8:14-21

v14 The *disciples had forgotten to bring any bread. They had only one loaf with them in the boat. **v15** Jesus warned them, 'Be careful. Watch out for the *yeast of the *Pharisees and the *yeast of Herod.' **v16** The *disciples talked about this with each other. They said, 'He is probably saying this because we do not have any bread.' **v17** Jesus knew what they were saying. So he said to them, 'You should not still be talking about not having any bread. You still do not seem to see or understand. Your minds seem to be so unwilling to change. **v18** You have eyes but you seem not to see. You have ears but you seem not to hear. Perhaps you have forgotten. **v19** When I broke the five loaves for five thousand people, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?' They said, '12'. **v20** 'And when I broke the seven loaves for four thousand people, how many baskets of pieces did you pick up?' They said, 'Seven'. **v21** Jesus said to them, 'Then you should understand now.'

Verse 15 '*Yeast' is a substance that people use to make bread rise. The *Jews used '*yeast' as a sign of something evil. A small amount of *yeast makes bread rise. It spreads through all the bread. And the bad things that the *Pharisees taught could affect the whole of society. The reference to Herod probably means Herod's friends, the *Herodians. They would do anything to keep Herod Antipas as king. They did not care whether it was right or wrong.

Verse 16 The *disciples were like blind people who cannot see something dangerous. The *disciples might imitate the bad behaviour of the *Pharisees and the *Herodians. That was the danger that the *disciples were in.

They were also worried because they had no bread. They could not see that Jesus had the power to help them.

Verses 17-21 Jesus reminded them about the *miracles when he fed two great crowds of people. They were still 'blind' to the power and love of Jesus, even when they had seen these *miracles.

The blind man 8:22-26

v22 Jesus and his *disciples came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to Jesus. They asked Jesus to touch him. **v23** Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. He used liquid from his mouth on the man's eyes and he laid his hands on him. Jesus asked him, 'Do you see anything?' **v24** The man looked up and he said, 'I see men. They look like trees that are walking about.' **v25** Then Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes again. The man looked as hard as he could. His sight returned and he saw everything clearly. **v26** Jesus sent him home. He told him, 'Do not even go into the village.'

Verse 22 Bethsaida was on the east side of the River Jordan. It was outside Herod's territory.

Verse 23 Jesus showed the blind man that he would cure him. He took him away from the village so that crowds would not confuse the man. He used liquid from his mouth, as *Jewish doctors did. He laid hands on him. That was to show that God's power was going to cure him.

Verses 24-25 This *miracle, which only Mark records, happened in two parts. Usually Jesus cured people immediately. Perhaps this incident was a sign that the *spiritual eyes of the *disciples only opened slowly. Perhaps that is why Mark recorded it. Christians do not understand Christ's love completely at first. They learn his love and power slowly. Christians should not give up easily when they have difficulties. Perhaps that is what Mark wanted to show us.

The question at Caesarea Philippi 8:27-30

v27 Jesus and his *disciples left and they went to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he asked his *disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' **v28** They answered him, 'John the *Baptist. And other people say that you are Elijah. Other people say that you are one of the *prophets.' **v29** And Jesus asked them, 'Who do you say that I am?' Peter replied, 'You are the Christ.' **v30** Jesus gave them strict instructions not to say anything about him to other people.

Verse 27 Caesarea Philippi was in the north, near the source of the River Jordan. Philip, who was the ruler of that area, had built the city. It had the name Caesarea 'Philippi'. That showed that it was not the same place as Caesarea on the coast. That was in the area that his brother, Herod Antipas, ruled. Caesarea Philippi was a city that was full of *temples to the *Greek gods, and to the nature god, Pan. The *disciples were 'on the way' to Jerusalem with Jesus. Jesus described himself as the Way to God (John 14:6). People described early Christians as those who belonged to the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:23).

Verse 28 The opinions that Jesus was John the *Baptist or Elijah are the same as those in 6:14. The opinion that he was 'one of the *prophets' rather than 'like' one of the *prophets (6:14) is different. It referred to a *prophet who had come back to life.

Verse 29 Jesus emphasised the word 'you'. It was not enough for the *disciples to know what other people thought. They must decide for themselves. The *disciples had asked, 'Who is this?' (4:41). Jesus had spoken about the fact that they did not understand (8:17-21). But now Peter spoke for all the *disciples. He made the bold statement, 'You are the Christ.'

This incident comes in the middle of Mark's *Gospel. The first chapters record the works and words of Jesus as he invited people into God's *kingdom. From the time at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus taught that he must suffer. He explained what it means to be a *disciple. And he began his journey to Jerusalem.

Verse 30 'Christ' is the *Greek word for the *Hebrew word '*Messiah'. (See the note on 1:1.) The *Jews were expecting a *Messiah who would defeat their enemies. This person would lead an army against the *Romans and he would gain political freedom for them. Jesus did not want the *disciples to encourage that belief. So he did not want them to say that he was the *Messiah. The crowds might then stop Jesus from training his *disciples. The *disciples had to learn the true nature of the *Messiah's work.

Jesus speaks about his death 8:31-33

Jesus told his *disciples on three different occasions that he would suffer and die (8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34). This was the first occasion, immediately after Peter's declaration that Jesus was the *Messiah.

v31 Then Jesus began to teach the *disciples that the Son of Man must suffer greatly. The chief priests and the *scribes and the other leaders would refuse to accept him. They would kill him. He would rise up three days later. **v32** He said the word clearly. Peter took him aside and began to protest against such an idea. **v33** But Jesus turned round. He saw his *disciples, and he spoke very firmly to Peter. He said, 'Get behind me, *Satan. You are thinking in men's ways, not God's ways.'

Verse 31 Jesus would suffer on behalf of other people. He would be like the servant of God whom Isaiah described (Isaiah chapter 53). 'Son of man' can refer to a picture that Daniel saw in his mind. (See Daniel 7:13-14.) There, someone called a 'son of man' would receive authority and power from God. He would receive an *eternal *kingdom. The name that Jesus used for himself may therefore mean the same as '*Messiah'.

Jesus said that he 'must' suffer. He knew that his pain and death were part of God's plan. God's plan was to rescue man from *sin.

The chief priests, the *scribes and the other leaders were members of the chief *Jewish ruling authority. They called it the *Sanhedrin.

Matthew (16:21) and Luke (9:22) say 'on the third day'. Mark says 'three days later' because he included the first and the last day in the count.

Verse 32 Mark calls what Jesus said 'the word' (*Greek 'logos'). It was a clear message that was part of the *gospel. And the *gospel was 'good' news.

Peter and the other *disciples understood what Jesus said. But they did not want to believe that these things would happen to him. For them, talk about suffering was difficult to accept. It was only after Jesus' death and *resurrection that they were able to 'see' clearly. Then they understood why Jesus had to suffer.

Verse 33 *Satan was *tempting Jesus by means of Peter. It was the same *temptation to avoid pain and trouble as in Luke 4:5-7. Then *Satan was *tempting Jesus. 'Get behind me' was a command to *Satan. He must stop *tempting Jesus. It was also a command to Peter and the other *disciples. Jesus meant, 'I do not follow you. You should follow me and my ideas.' Peter may have spoken because of love for Jesus. But it was not his job to teach Jesus. He must allow Jesus to teach him.

The *disciples of Jesus must suffer 8:34-38

v34 Then Jesus called the crowd and the *disciples to him. He said to them, 'If anyone wants to come with me, let him say no to his own wishes and comfort. Let him carry his *cross and follow me. **v35** Because anyone who wants to save his life will lose it. And anyone who loses his life for me and for the *gospel will save it. **v36** A person might gain the whole world but lose his *soul. Even then he would really have gained nothing. **v37** There is nothing that he can exchange for his own *soul. **v38** You might be ashamed of me and my words among these wicked people who have no *faith. Then the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes. He will come then in the very bright light from his Father with his holy *angels.'

Verse 34 Jesus spoke not only to the 12 *disciples, but also to anyone in the crowd who might follow him. Jesus was honest. Jesus did not offer people an easy life. He did not try to persuade people to follow him like that. A *disciple must forget his own wishes if he wants to follow Jesus. The *Romans fixed criminals to a *cross. That is how they punished them. The criminal had to carry part of his own *cross to the place where the soldiers would kill him. Jesus said that those who followed him must be willing for the same shame and suffering as himself.

Verse 35 'anyone who wants to save his life will lose it' has two possible meanings:

1 A selfish way to live will not give anyone a life on earth of true worth.

2 Life on earth is of no value if a person loses the life with God after death. Some Christians suffer and die for their *faith. Those Christians know that they will gain life with God for all time.

Verses 36-37 'The whole world' may refer to possessions, power, pleasures and popularity. But all these are only temporary. What the world offers is nothing compared with the value of the *soul. The *soul is for all time. It is foolish if a man forgets his *eternal *soul for pleasures in this world. It is foolish because those pleasures do not last.

Verse 38 Proverbs 29:25 says, 'The fear of man will be a trap.' Fear of the opinion or laughter of other people may make a Christian ashamed to declare his *faith. Jesus said that he would then be ashamed of them. He referred to the time when he will come again. Then, he will return in the very bright light from his Father.

Chapter 9

Jesus makes a promise 9:1

v1 Jesus said to them, 'I am telling you the truth. Some men who are standing here will see God's *kingdom come with power. And they will not die before they see it.'

Verse 1 Jesus did not mean the time when he will come again. Some writers suggest that he did mean that. But that would mean that Jesus made a mistake. So it cannot be true. He did not return with power while his *disciples were alive. But Jesus is probably describing his *resurrection. Also, he is describing the time when the *Holy Spirit would come at *Pentecost and the spread of the *gospel. Thirty (30) years after Jesus' death on the *cross, the message about the *kingdom had spread everywhere where the *Romans ruled. A small group of *disciples had become the beginning of a world wide church. The *kingdom did come with power in the lives of many people who were listening to Jesus. But perhaps Jesus was talking about what happens in verses 2-13. That is what some other Christians think.

Jesus' face and clothes become very bright 9:2-13

Peter, James and John see the great honour and beauty of Jesus.

v2 After six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him. He took them up a high mountain all alone by themselves. He changed in front of them. **v3** His clothes became so white that they shone. They were whiter than anyone on earth could wash them white. **v4** Elijah and Moses appeared to Jesus and the *disciples. The two of them were talking with Jesus. **v5** Peter said to Jesus, 'Teacher, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' **v6** Peter said this because he did not know what to say. That was because they were extremely frightened. **v7** Then a cloud came and it covered them with its shadow. A voice came from the cloud. The voice said, 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.' **v8** They looked round. At once, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

v9 As they came down the mountain, Jesus gave them an order. He ordered them not to tell anybody what they had seen. He told them to wait until the Son of Man had risen from death. **v10** So they kept the matter to themselves. But they asked each other what 'risen from death' meant. **v11** They asked Jesus, 'Why do the *scribes say that Elijah has to come first?' **v12** Jesus replied, 'Elijah does come first. He makes everything new again. But the *Scriptures truly say that the Son of Man will suffer much. And they say that people will not accept him. **v13** But I tell you that Elijah has come. They did to him everything that they wanted to do. It was exactly as the *Scriptures said about him.'

Verse 2 The mountain was probably *Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is so high that there is snow on it. Tradition says that it was *Mount Tabor. But that is much further south in Galilee, and it is not so high.

Mark does not say how Jesus changed. Matthew says that his face shone like the sun (Matthew 17:2).

Verse 3 It was difficult for Mark to describe how white the clothes of Jesus were. They were very, very white. So he could only think that they shone like gold or the light of the sun. Nobody who washed clothes could make them as bright.

Verse 4 Elijah was a great *prophet. Moses had received the Law from God. Their appearance showed that Jesus made the promises of the *Old Testament come true. He is greater than the *prophets, and he explained the Law more completely. Mark does not say what they were talking about. Luke tells us that they were talking about Jesus' death in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

Verses 5-6 Peter offered to build three shelters. That shows how confused and frightened he was. He had been asleep and he had just woken up. He was thinking of all three as if they were the same. But Jesus is different from Moses and Elijah. He is much more important. Perhaps Peter wanted to stay on the mountain, where there would not be any more work or pain. But it was a practical thought in their situation. It was dark and therefore cold. They might need shelter! Luke tells us that they did not come down from the mountain until the next morning.

Verse 7 A cloud was the sign that God was there. Moses went up *Mount Sinai in order to receive the Law. Then, the cloud covered the mountain for six days. Then the *Lord called to Moses from out of the cloud (Exodus 24:15-16). God spoke out of the cloud to the three *disciples. He spoke in words like those at Jesus' *baptism (1:11). Moses told the people to 'listen' to the *prophet like himself whom God would send (Deuteronomy 18:15). God told the *disciples to 'listen' to Jesus. The *disciples learned something. They were right to believe that Jesus was the *Messiah. What he told them was true.

Verses 9-10 The three men obeyed Jesus' instructions not to tell anyone about their experience until after the *resurrection. Peter later wrote about it in his letter (2 Peter 1:16-18). But they did not understand it when Jesus talked about death and *resurrection.

Verse 11 The *scribes taught that Elijah would return. And he would prepare people for the *Messiah (Malachi 4:5). The *disciples wanted to ask Jesus this question: 'Why has Elijah not arrived, if you are the *Messiah?'

Verses 12-13 Jesus explained that Elijah had come already. He did not mean that Elijah himself had come into the world again in John the *Baptist. He meant that John the *Baptist was a *prophet like Elijah. He had the same bold courage as Elijah and he was as loyal to God. Queen Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2). Herodias wanted the death of John the *Baptist (Mark 6:19). The man who had prepared the way for the *Messiah had suffered. And he had died. Jesus was therefore telling them that the *Messiah himself would suffer too. And he would die.

Jesus cures a boy with an evil *spirit 9:14-29

There is a reason why Mark describes this incident in detail. It is not first of all to show the authority and power of Jesus. It is to show the importance of *faith and the lesson that the *disciples had to learn about prayer.

v14 When Jesus and the three *disciples returned to the other *disciples, they saw a great crowd round them. The *scribes were arguing with the *disciples. **v15** As soon as the crowd saw Jesus, they were astonished. They ran up to him and they greeted him. **v16** Jesus asked, 'What are you arguing about?' **v17** A man in the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you because he has a *spirit. The *spirit makes him unable to speak. **v18** Wherever he is, it gets hold of him. It throws him down on the ground. Bubbles come from his mouth and he bites his teeth together. He becomes stiff. I asked your *disciples to send it out, but they could not do it.' **v19** Jesus answered them, 'You people without *faith! It is hard for me to stay with you. It is hard for me to be with you. Bring him to me.' **v20** So they brought the boy to Jesus. As soon as the *spirit saw Jesus, it shook the boy hard. He fell on the ground. He rolled about and bubbles came from his mouth. **v21** Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' He answered, 'Since he was a child. **v22** The *spirit has often thrown him into the fire or into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, pity us. Please help us.' **v23** Jesus said to him, 'If you can! Everything is possible to him who believes.' **v24** At once the boy's father cried out, 'I do believe! Help me to overcome my doubts!'

v25 Jesus saw that a crowd was running towards them. They were running to see what was happening. Then he ordered the evil *spirit to leave the boy. 'You, *spirit that makes him unable to hear or speak! I order you, come out of him. And never enter him again.' **v26** The *spirit screamed and it shook the boy in a terrible way. Then it came out of him. The boy looked so still and pale, like a dead person, that many people said, 'He is dead.' **v27** But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up. And the boy stood up. **v28** When Jesus had gone into the house, his *disciples asked him in private, 'Why could we not send out the evil *spirit?' **v29** Jesus replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'

Verse 14 The *scribes were probably taking the opportunity to laugh at Jesus because they were laughing at his *disciples. Because the *disciples had failed, they were perhaps trying to defend themselves against the *scribes' remarks.

Verse 15 Jesus' sudden arrival may have surprised the crowd. But Mark writes that they were 'astonished'. This was a word that he usually put at the end of an incident. When Moses went down from *Mount Sinai, his face shone (Exodus 34:30). The *disciples had seen the great honour and beauty of Jesus on the mountain. It is possible that there was still evidence of that on Jesus. He had ordered his three *disciples not to say anything. But there may have been some sign in his face of what had happened to him on the mountain.

Verse 16 Jesus sometimes asked for information. He may have known the answer to his question. If so, he wanted to give them a chance to be honest. See Mark 9:33-34, too.

Verses 17-18 The boy's father described what happened to his child. Doctors today might say that he suffered from an illness called 'epilepsy'.

Verse 19 Jesus spoke to all the people, not to the *disciples only. He felt despair at the lack of *faith of people at this time. But he ordered them to bring the boy to him.

Verse 20 As soon as the boy came near Jesus, the evil *spirit tried to control the boy again.

Verses 21-22 The father replied to Jesus' question. He said that the boy had been like this since he was a child. He had often fallen into a fire or into water because the evil *spirit had tried to kill him. The father asked Jesus for his help, 'if' Jesus had the power to cure his son.

Verse 23 Jesus repeated the father's words. He meant, 'You should not say "if" I can. That shows that you do not believe in me. You do not believe that I have the power.' He was suggesting that the father needed *faith. With *faith, everything becomes possible.

Verse 24 The father's cry, 'I do believe! Help me to overcome my doubts!' describes what many Christians feel. They trust Jesus. But they are not sure that they trust him completely.

Verses 25-26 People are always curious when something unusual is happening. Some of the crowd rushed to see what Jesus was doing. Jesus gave an order that the evil *spirit should leave the boy for always. There was a struggle. It left the boy very weak. So people thought that he was dead.

Verse 27 Jesus helped him to stand up. There is no record by Mark of the father's joy or the crowd's reaction. The important matter in the incident was what Jesus taught about *faith.

Verses 28-29 The *disciples wanted to know why they could not throw out the evil *spirit. Jesus had given them authority to throw out evil *spirits when he had sent them out in pairs (Mark 6:7). They may have forgotten that their success then was not because of their own power. The *disciples should have prayed. But they had argued with each other instead. Jesus emphasised the need for prayer. The prayer of *faith is necessary before anyone can defeat the power of evil things. When they are fighting evil things, Christians need *spiritual resources (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Jesus speaks about his death for the second time 9:30-32

v30 They went on from there through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were. **v31** This was because he was teaching his *disciples. He told them, 'They will hand the Son of Man over to men. They will kill him. After three days he will rise from death.' **v32** But they did not understand what he meant. And they were afraid to ask him.

Verses 30-31 The period when Jesus was teaching publicly in Galilee was over. He wanted to avoid crowds so that he could train his *disciples. 'Hand over' means that someone would make it possible for the authorities to arrest Jesus. The words 'hand over' might also mean that God would allow Jesus to die. That was the only means by which God could *save people.

Verse 32 The *disciples were too frightened to ask Jesus to explain. On a previous occasion, Jesus had told them that he would suffer. They had opposed the idea then and Jesus had blamed them. Perhaps they did not want to risk such a severe reply again (8:32-33). They might also have learned something worse, and perhaps they preferred not to know.

Real greatness 9:33-37

v33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, Jesus asked his *disciples, 'What were you talking about on the way?' **v34** But they kept quiet because, on the way, they had argued. They had argued about which *disciple was the most important. **v35** Jesus sat down and he called the 12 men to come to him. Then he said, 'If you want to be first, you must be last of all. You must be everyone's servant.' **v36** Jesus took a child and he made the child stand among them. Then he took the child in his arms. He said to them, **v37** 'Anyone who welcomes (gives a welcome to) one of these little children in my name welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me does not welcome me only. He welcomes the Person who sent me.'

Verses 33-34 Perhaps some of the *disciples were jealous of the three men who had been alone on the mountain with Jesus. But they were all still thinking about a political *kingdom in which Jesus would give them important places. Jesus had taught them that he would suffer. And he would die. But that had not changed their wrong idea about the *Messiah's purpose. The *disciples kept quiet because they were ashamed to tell Jesus.

Verse 35 *Jewish teachers sat to teach their pupils. The fact that Jesus sat down showed that he was going to teach his *disciples. If they wanted greatness in his *kingdom, they must not try to take the most important place. They must not be proud and expect to be the masters. They must be willing to serve everyone.

Verse 36 In order to emphasise this need for service, Jesus acted a *parable. He used a little child as an example. The *Aramaic word 'talya' can mean both 'child' and 'servant'. Children have no power and they have to depend on the help of adults. The *disciples must serve even little children. But 'children' includes all people who are weak and in need of help. Paul said, 'As for the man who is weak in *faith, give him a welcome' (Romans 14:1).

Verse 37 'In my name' means 'with my authority and for me'. Humble service is service to Jesus himself. 'As you did it to one of the least you did it to me' (Matthew 25:40). Jesus was working for God, who had sent him. Therefore, whenever people serve him, they are serving God.

There were already arguments in the early church about leadership when Mark was writing his book. Mark probably recorded this incident for that reason.

When to accept other people 9:38-41

This passage has a link with the previous one because it also contains the phrase 'in my name'.

v38 John said to Jesus, 'Teacher, we saw a man who was sending out evil *spirits in your name. We told him to stop because he was not a member of our group.' **v39** But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him. Nobody who does such a powerful work in my name will soon after be able to speak against me. **v40** Anyone who is not against us is on our side. **v41** I tell you the truth. Perhaps someone will give you even a cup of water to drink because you are *disciples of Christ. That person will certainly receive a reward.'

Verses 38-39 John spoke for himself and the other *disciples. The man was not in their group. So, they told him to stop sending evil *spirits out of people 'in the name' of Jesus. Some *Jews in Ephesus tried to use 'the name of Jesus whom Paul *preaches'. They failed. They thought that Jesus' name might be a magic way to send an evil *spirit out of a person (Acts 19:13-16). But Jesus told the *disciples not to stop a man with *faith who was working for him.

Christians should be glad when other people are successful. They should not be jealous of those who *worship and serve God in a different way.

Verse 40 A man is either on Christ's side or against him. When he is doing good deeds, he is on God's side.

Verse 41 A person may give help to a *disciple of Christ. God will reward that person. 'A cup of water' shows that the help need not be in an important matter. It can be a small act of kindness.

Jesus warns against *temptation 9:42-50

Jesus warns us about two things:

- 1 We must not cause other people to *sin verse 42.
- 2 We must be strict with ourselves verses 43-50.

v42 'It will be terrible for anyone who causes one of these young believers to *sin. It would be better for him if someone put a large mill-stone round his neck. People would then throw him into the sea.

v43-44 If your hand causes you to *sin, cut it off. It would be better for you to enter life with only one hand than to go to *Gehenna with two hands. That is where the fire never goes out.

v45-46 If your foot causes you to *sin, cut it off. You do not want God to throw you into *Gehenna with both your feet. To enter into life on one foot is better than that.

v47 If your eye causes you to do wrong things, pull it out. You do not want God to throw you into *Gehenna with your two eyes. To enter the *kingdom of God with one eye is better than that.

v48 There the worm (small long thin animal) does not die and the fire never goes out. **v49** Fire will salt everyone. **v50** Salt is good. But if it loses its true salt taste, you can never make its flavour come back. Have salt in yourselves and live at peace with each other.'

Verse 42 The *disciples are responsible for those who are young *spiritually as well as for children. It is better to drown than to make a child or a young or weak Christian *sin. A *disciple must be careful about what he teaches. A *disciple's bad or careless behaviour may make a young believer imitate him. *Disciples must not cause young believers to lose their *faith. They must not do it by what they teach. And they must not do it by their example.

To drown someone with a large weight round his neck was a way to punish people in those days. A mill-stone turned wheat into flour. A large mill-stone was a big round stone with a hole in the middle. A *donkey pulled the stone round over the wheat by a bar of wood through the hole. If someone put a person's head through the hole of this heavy stone, he would certainly drown.

Verses 43-48 The hand, the foot and the eye can cause a *disciple to do wrong things. The fruit that *tempted Eve was 'a delight to the eyes' (Genesis 3:6). It is possible to do something or to go somewhere which may cause you to *sin. Jesus did not mean that a *disciple must remove parts of his *physical body. He was using picture language. *Disciples must be willing to *sacrifice anything that stops their *spiritual life from growing. The *sacrifice may be as painful as it would be to lose a limb. Christians do not only have to give up bad things. Often, they have to give up good things as well. It may be a job, a pleasure or a friendship. It will not be the same for each *disciple. Each *disciple must decide for himself what may be preventing him from obeying God completely.

To enter 'life' and to enter the '*kingdom' mean the same. 'Life' is to enjoy a friendship with God by giving him honour as king. '*Gehenna' was the name of a valley outside Jerusalem that had become the city's rubbish heap. Worms (small long thin animals) lived on the rubbish, and a fire was always burning there. These words about worms and fire come from Isaiah 66:24. *Gehenna was such a terrible place that the *Jews started to use the name for a place of punishment. It was a place where God would destroy wicked people. People usually translate the word '*Gehenna' as 'hell'.

Verses 49-50 contain three separate things that Jesus said about 'salt'. Jesus may have given them on separate occasions. But together they remind his *disciples of the necessity of pure lives that will help themselves and other people.

1 The *Jews put salt on a gift to God (Leviticus 2:13). It was a sign of the agreement between God and his people. *Disciples should remember to be loyal to God. Also, fire makes things clean and pure. It might therefore mean any experience that makes a Christian pure. We should obey God and we should accept pain and trouble. That is like the 'fire' that makes a Christian life a pure gift to God.

2 Salt gives food flavour. It also prevents things going off. The *disciples of Jesus should make a difference to the world. It should be a better place to live in, as salt gives food a better taste. They should also stop wrong things that are making society bad. Salt that came from the Dead Sea sometimes had other substances in it. Although it looked like salt, it had lost its proper salt taste. Some *disciples may lose their desire to give God's message. Then they are of no use as the 'salt of the earth' (Matthew 5:13).

3 People who were together sometimes put salt on their food as a sign. It was a sign that they trusted each other. Jesus said that the *disciples must have the 'salt' of friendship. He may have said it when they were arguing with each other.

Chapter 10

Jesus teaches about marriage and divorce 10:1-12

v1 Jesus left Capernaum. He went to the region called Judea and he went into the area east of the River Jordan. Crowds came to him again and, as usual, he taught them. **v2** Some *Pharisees came and they tested him with the question, 'Does the law allow a man to divorce his wife?' **v3** Jesus asked them, 'What command did Moses give to you?' **v4** They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write an official letter of divorce and to send her away.' **v5** But Jesus replied, 'Moses wrote this law for you because you are so unkind. **v6** From the beginning, "God made them male and female. **v7** For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and he will unite with his wife. **v8** And the two shall become like one body." **v9** Therefore, man must not separate what God has joined together.'

v10 When they were back in the house, the *disciples asked him about this subject. **v11** Jesus told them, 'Suppose that a man divorces his wife. If he marries someone else, he is guilty of *adultery against her. **v12** Suppose that a woman divorces her husband. If she marries again, she is guilty of *adultery.'

Verse 1 Jesus left Galilee and he went to the south. He went into the area east of the River Jordan. He was at the beginning of his journey to Jerusalem.

Verse 2 The *Pharisees' question was like a trap in several ways:

1 Jesus might speak against divorce. Then, they could say that he was not obeying the Law (Deuteronomy 24:1).

2 There was a difference of opinion about the meaning of the words 'something not right' in the wife (Deuteronomy 24:1). Some people followed the teacher Shammai. They said that it meant '*adultery'. That was the only reason for a divorce. But other people followed Hillel's opinion. They said that a man could divorce his wife for many reasons. She might have burnt his dinner or talked too much. Or perhaps she was not as beautiful as another woman. Women in the time of Jesus therefore did not have any security. Men behaved as if women were property. They were not human people to whom men had a responsibility. Whatever opinion Jesus agreed with would have annoyed some people in the crowd.

3 Jesus might have said that divorce was wrong. But then, he risked the anger of Herod. Herod had already killed John the *Baptist because he spoke against Herod's *adultery with Herodias.

Verses 4-5 Jesus said that the Law allowed divorce. But the Law did not say that men and women must divorce. Divorce was not God's purpose. But it was a way to prevent a bad situation.

Verses 6-7 Jesus used words from Genesis 1:27. He emphasised God's purpose when he created men and women. They would marry. A man would leave his parents in order to unite with his wife.

Verse 8 'like one body' is about more than people's bodies. It means that man and wife join each other in a unity of *spirit and purpose.

Verse 9 God intended marriage to be for life. Christians have different answers about whether divorce is always wrong.

1 Jesus said that the rules in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 were only because of man's *sin. People should have the strict view that divorce is wrong. Jesus said that *adultery is the only exception. (See Matthew 19:9.)

2 Jesus told people that God could forgive them for their failure. When a husband and wife *relationship seems to have failed, the two people can forgive each other. The only 'rule' that Jesus gave was the rule of love. But he showed from Genesis that the ideal of a permanent *relationship was God's original purpose.

Jesus and children 10:13-16

v13 People were bringing little children to Jesus so that he could touch them. But the *disciples told the people to stop. **v14** When Jesus saw this, he was very angry. He said to his *disciples, 'Let the children come to me. Do not keep them away. God's *kingdom belongs to people like them. **v15** I am telling you the truth. Whoever will not receive God's *kingdom as a little child will not enter it.' **v16** Then he took the children into his arms. He put his hands on them and he blessed them.

Verse 13 The *disciples thought that children were not important. And they thought that they would not understand Jesus' words. Jesus was busy and they wanted to protect him from these interruptions.

Verse 14 Jesus was very angry. Christians ought to be angry as well, when adults are unfair to children. Christians should also be angry when adults do not show children any love.

Verse 15 Children are very pleased to receive a gift. People cannot cause God to forgive them by things that they do. They must accept it as a gift. Children trust people and accept their authority. People should trust God in the same way and obey his authority as their king.

Verse 16 Jesus took young children in his arms and he blessed them. That is one reason why Christians began to *baptise young children. But many Christians believe that this incident is not at all about *baptism. Jesus blessed the children. That is a sign of the joy that members of God's *kingdom can have.

Jesus teaches about possessions 10:17-31

- 1 A rich man refuses to follow Jesus, verses 17-22.
- 2 Jesus explains the danger of wealth to his *disciples, verses 23-27.
- 3 Jesus teaches his *disciples about rewards, verses 28-31.

The rich man makes his choice 10:17-22

v17 As Jesus began his journey, a man ran up to Jesus. He went on his knees and he asked, 'Good Teacher, what should I do in order to get *eternal life?' **v18** Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? It is God alone who is really good. **v19** You know the *commandments. Do not kill. Do not be guilty of *adultery. Do not steal. Do not make false statements. Do not cheat. Respect your father and mother.' **v20** The man said to Jesus, 'Teacher, I have obeyed all these *commandments since I was a child.' **v21** Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. He said to the man, 'You are without one thing. Go. And sell everything that you have. Give the money to people who are poor. You will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me.' **v22** The man's face showed his disappointment. He went away sad because he was very rich.

Verse 17 Mark wrote that Jesus was on a 'journey'. He probably meant the journey that ended in Jerusalem. Matthew describes the man as 'young' (Matthew 19:20). Luke says that he was a 'ruler' (Luke 18:18). Mark says that he was 'very rich' (verse 22). The rich young ruler wanted to know how he could enter the *kingdom. He thought that he must do something good.

Verse 18 He had called Jesus 'good'. Jesus asked him whether he meant it. The word 'good' belonged to God alone. Jesus was not saying that he himself was not good. He was asking the man a question. Would he accept Jesus' reply as if it came from God himself?

Verse 19 The *commandments were the last six of the Ten *Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17). They refer to a person's relationship to society. The sixth one, 'Do not cheat', takes the place of 'Do not feel jealous of your neighbour's possessions'. A person might have such a strong desire for other people's things that he would cheat to obtain them. Jesus did not mention the first *commandment, 'You must have no other gods before me.'

Verse 20 The man believed that he had always kept these *commandments. He was a citizen who obeyed the law. He had never done anything wrong to other people. We should not do wrong things. But goodness is more than that. He could have been generous with his money. That would have helped other people. But he had not done that. And he had forgotten the first *commandment. His first duty was to be loyal to God.

Verse 21 Jesus was honest. The man's wealth was preventing him from living his life as God intended. And Jesus knew that. 'You cannot serve God and money' (Matthew 6:24). So Jesus told him to sell his possessions and to give the money to poor people. Then he could be a friend of God. '*Eternal life' begins on earth and it continues in heaven. Jesus invited the man to follow him.

Verse 22 The man had asked Jesus what he should 'do' to enter the *kingdom. But nobody can 'earn' *eternal life. It is a gift from God. The man's possessions were so important to him that he could not follow Jesus. So he could not receive that gift. He gave up the true happiness of *eternal life for the temporary pleasures of wealth. He went away sad and disappointed.

Jesus explains the danger of wealth to his *disciples 10:23-27

v23 Jesus looked round and he said to his *disciples, 'It is very difficult for people who have riches to enter the *kingdom of God.' **v24** The *disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus repeated, 'Children, it is very hard for those who trust in riches to enter the *kingdom of God. **v25** It is very hard for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.' **v26** The *disciples were even more astonished. They said, 'Then who can God *save?' **v27** Jesus looked straight at them and he said, 'With man, that is impossible, but not with God. Everything is possible with God.'

Verse 23 The *disciples were astonished at what Jesus said. Many people believe that wealth is a reward from God for good people. And many people believed it then. But Jesus knew the danger of many possessions. They make a person think too much about this world. He then forgets the life of heaven. There are many things of value that money cannot buy. But a person may forget that. There is the *temptation to use wealth in a selfish way. Someone may think that his wealth makes him important. Then he may become proud.

Verse 25 What Jesus said about the camel is very funny. So it would make people laugh. Then they would remember it. Some writers try to make it sound more sensible. They suggest that a camel with a big load could not get through a narrow gate into a city. So a man with a 'load' of possessions could not enter the *kingdom. Other writers suggest that the word for 'camel' and the word for a 'thick string' are similar. But there are similar words about an elephant in a *Jewish book. So Jesus was using words that might have been familiar.

Verse 26 The *disciples thought, 'If the rich people cannot enter the *kingdom, it would be very difficult for anyone else.'

Verse 27 It is impossible for anyone to *save himself by his own efforts. God *saves us by a gift from himself. The man who trusts in his possessions cannot receive the gift. He must trust in God's love. To accept God's love makes his entry into the *kingdom possible.

Jesus teaches his *disciples about rewards 10:28-31

v28 Peter began to say to Jesus, 'Look! We have left everything and we have followed you.' **v29** Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth. Some people may have given up a house, brothers or sisters, parents or land for me and the good news. **v30** Then they will receive a hundred times as much in this life. They will have homes and families and land. They will also suffer because people will oppose them. In the world that is to come, they will have *eternal life. **v31** But many that are first will be last. And the last will be first.'

Verse 28 Peter thought that he and the other *disciples were not like the rich young man. That man had refused to follow Jesus. But they had left their homes and families in order to follow him.

Verse 29 Peter was perhaps thinking about an equal reward for an equal service. But even in this life, a *disciple receives rewards far greater than anything that he has given up. He will become part of the much greater Christian family, the family of God (Ephesians 2:19). Those who obey God are Jesus' 'mother and sisters and brothers' (3:31-35). Jesus had already said that. For example, this was true about Paul. He left his home in Tarsus. But he gained friends wherever he travelled. He wrote about the mother of Rufus as his own 'mother' (Romans 16:13).

At the time when Mark wrote his *Gospel, Christians were already suffering for their *faith. Their reward would not be complete on earth. But the *disciples would be able to continue their friendship with God beyond death.

Verse 31 Jesus used these words on other occasions. He was warning people but he was also giving a promise. God does not think about a person in the same way as men and women think about other people and themselves. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts', says the *Lord (Isaiah 55:8). People whom other people value for their wealth or important place in society may be of less importance in heaven. God will give honour to those whom the world considers of little value.

Jesus tells them for the third time what would happen to him 10:32-34

v32 They were on the road that went up to Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them. The *disciples were astonished. And those who followed behind were afraid. Again Jesus took the 12 *disciples aside. He began to tell them what was going to happen to him. **v33** He said, 'We are going up to Jerusalem. Someone will hand the Son of Man over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. They will say that he must die. Then they will hand him over to the *Gentiles. **v34** The *Gentiles will make fun of him and they will insult him. They will hit him with cruel whips and they will kill him. Three days later, he will rise from death.'

Verse 32 Jesus had made the lonely and brave decision to go to Jerusalem. He was ahead of his *disciples on the road. He was also 'ahead of them' in what he understood. Mark seems to speak about two groups of people, the *disciples and the other people who followed. Jesus had just talked to them about suffering. So they were afraid that something terrible was going to happen in Jerusalem.

Verses 33-34 Jesus describes in more detail what would happen to him. Mark knew that these things had happened to Jesus. The *Jews counted part of a day as a whole day. Jesus died on a Friday and he rose on a Sunday. So Jesus would rise 'three' days later.

The request of James and John 10:35-40

v35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. They said, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you.' **v36** Jesus said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' **v37** They said to him, 'You will receive great honour. We want to sit, one of us on your right side and one of us on your left, then. Grant us that right.' **v38** But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Can you suffer the *baptism of pain and trouble that I must suffer?' **v39** They said to him, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'You will drink the cup that I drink. And you will suffer the *baptism of pain and trouble that I must suffer.' **v40** But I must not say who should sit at my right hand or my left. These places belong to those that God has prepared them for.'

Verse 35 James and John did not understand Jesus' words about how he must suffer. They showed that by what they said. Immediately afterwards they came with their request. Matthew says that it was their mother, Salome, who asked (Matthew 20:20-23). She agreed with her sons' ambitions. They wanted the chief places in Jesus' *kingdom. They were confident that he would rule as a king. But they were still thinking about a political *Messiah. This man would defeat the *Romans and then he would establish a political *kingdom. They thought that they had the first claim to receive the most important places. With Peter, they had been with Jesus on two special occasions. They saw him raise Jairus's daughter. They were there on the mountain when Jesus' face and clothes became bright. They may also have thought that Jesus should give them honour because they were his relatives. Their mother Salome was probably the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56; John 19:25). So they would have been cousins of Jesus.

Verse 38 'A cup' was *Jewish picture language for an experience that God gave to men. It might be a sad experience. Or it might be a happy one, as in Psalm 23:5 ('my cup is completely full. So what is in it pours out'). Wicked people had to 'drink the cup' of God's anger (Psalm 75:8). For Jesus, it meant the experience of pain and death.

'*Baptism' did not mean the same as what John did. It meant a terrible experience. Jesus would feel like a man who was drowning in pain and death. It would be like that of the writer who felt despair. He wrote, 'All your waves have gone over me' (Psalm 42:7).

Verse 39 James and John did not really expect that Jesus or they themselves would have to suffer. They said, 'We can.' But they ran away when the soldiers arrested him. But after Jesus' *resurrection and the beginning of the Christian church, they did suffer. Herod Agrippa killed James (Acts 12:2). John probably lived to a great age and he may have died a natural death. But he suffered. He may have had to live on the island called Patmos because of his *faith (Revelation 1:9). Most Christians think that this John was the same man. Some Christians believe that he was another man.

Verse 40 Jesus said that final decisions belong to God. He did not think that he was unable to make decisions. But while he lived a human life, he did not claim his rights as God. He always obeyed his Father's wishes.

Jesus teaches about servants 10:41-45

v41 The other ten *disciples heard about it. And they became angry with James and John. **v42** Jesus called them together. He said to them, 'You know about those who rule over the *Gentiles. They rule them with absolute power. Their important officials use their authority over them. **v43** But you must not be like that. Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant. **v44** And anyone who wants to be first must be the slave of everyone. **v45** The Son of Man did not come for people to serve him. Instead, he came to serve other people. He came to give his life as the price to make many people free.'

Verse 41 The other *disciples were angry and jealous. They were no better than James and John. They considered themselves as important.

Verses 42-43 Jesus had to teach them what real greatness is. A person is not 'great' just because he has power and authority. However, people in the world do think that. But in Jesus' *kingdom, the 'great' person is the person who is a servant.

Verse 44 The word for servant in verse 43 is 'diakonos'. But here the word is 'doulos', which means a 'slave'. Paul called himself a 'slave of Jesus Christ' (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1). He said that he had made himself a 'slave to everyone' (1 Corinthians 9:19).

Verse 45 Jesus himself came into the world as a servant. His whole life was an example of service. He showed this to his *disciples at the Last Supper. He did the work of a slave when he washed their feet (John 13:1-16).

Jesus came in order to give his life. He was willing to die so that he could make people free from *sin. The word 'price' shows that it was at the great cost of pain and death for himself. He wanted to set all people free.

A blind man receives his sight 10:46-52

v46 They came to Jericho. Jesus was leaving Jericho with his *disciples and a great crowd. A blind man was sitting by the side of the road and he was asking for money. He was Bartimaeus, whose name means 'son of Timaeus'. **v47** He heard that it was Jesus from Nazareth. So then he began to cry out, 'Jesus, Son of David, pity me!' **v48** Many people told him to stop. They told him to be quiet. But he shouted even louder, 'Son of David, pity me!' **v49** Jesus stopped and he said, 'Call him.' They called the blind man. They said, 'Cheer up. Get up. He is calling for you.' **v50** Bartimaeus threw off his coat. He jumped up and he came to Jesus. **v51** Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'Master, let me receive my sight.' **v52** Jesus said to him, 'Go your way. Your *faith has made you well.' And immediately he could see. And he followed Jesus along the road.

Verse 46 Jericho is about 15 miles from Jerusalem. So Jesus was on the last part of his journey. The crowd would be people who were going up to Jerusalem for the *Passover. Mark knew the blind man's name, perhaps because he became well-known among the *disciples of Jesus.

Verse 47 Bartimaeus used the words 'Son of David'. It was one of the names of the *Messiah. It meant someone in the family of David. He would be a great king like David and he would defeat the *Jews' enemies. Bartimaeus may not have understood what kind of *Messiah Jesus was. But he had the *faith to call out for Jesus' help.

Verse 48 The people told him to stop. They wanted to listen to Jesus, and Bartimaeus was a nuisance. Some people may have been anxious about the words 'Son of David'. If any *Romans had understood that title, there might have been trouble.

Verse 49 Jesus stopped because he was always willing to help someone in need.

Verse 50 Bartimaeus was so eager to get to Jesus that he threw his coat aside. He may have had it on the ground for people to put money in. Many *disciples had left their businesses to follow Jesus. Bartimaeus left his coat in order to go to Jesus.

Verse 51 Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted. Jesus knew what he needed. But he wanted Bartimaeus to ask for it himself. God knows our needs, but he wants us to tell him about them (Philippians 4:6).

Verse 52 The *Greek word that we have translated 'made you well' can mean 'saved you'. Or it can mean 'made you whole'. Jesus cured the man's eyes, but he cured him *spiritually as well. Bartimaeus continued to show *faith in Jesus because he became a *disciple.

The story of Bartimaeus is like a picture. Jesus helped him to see. Jesus helps those who have *faith to 'see' the truth.

Chapter 11

A new part of Mark's *Gospel begins here. Jesus enters Jerusalem as the *Messiah. He teaches in the *Temple and he argues with the *religious authorities.

Jesus enters Jerusalem as *Messiah 11:1-11

v1 As they approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany, at the *Mount of *Olives. Jesus sent out two of his *disciples. **v2** He said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you. Just as you enter it, you will find a young *donkey tied up. Nobody has ever sat on it. Free it and bring it to me. **v3** If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The *Lord needs it. He will send it back soon." ' **v4** They went and found a young *donkey tied outside a door in the street. They freed it. **v5** Some people who were standing there said to them, 'What are you doing? Why are you freeing the *donkey?' **v6** They told them what Jesus had said. So they let them go.

v7 They brought the *donkey to Jesus. They put their coats on it. Then Jesus sat on it. **v8** Many people spread their coats on the road. Other people cut branches from the fields and they spread them on the road. **v9** Those in front and those at the back continued to shout, 'Hosanna (Please save us now)! *Blessed is the man who comes in the name of the *Lord! **v10** *Blessed is the coming *kingdom of our father David! *Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

v11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and he went into the *Temple. He looked round at everything. But it was already late. So he went out to Bethany with the 12 *disciples.

Verse 1 Bethphage and Bethany were two villages near each other on the slope of the *Mount of *Olives. Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem. It was the village where Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived. They were friends of Jesus.

Verses 2-3 We think that Jesus made arrangements about the *donkey some time before. We know from John's *Gospel that he made more than one visit to Jerusalem. Jesus spoke about 'how often' he would have gathered the people of Jerusalem to himself (Matthew 23:37). 'The *Lord needs it' was the special sign to the owner that Jesus' *disciples were not stealing the animal.

A *donkey was the animal that a king used. That is why Jesus chose to ride on one. When a king went to war, he rode on a horse. A *donkey showed that the king came in peace. Jesus made the words of Zechariah (9:9) come true. 'Your king comes to you - - -. He is riding on a *donkey.' Because the young *donkey had never carried anyone before, it was suitable for a holy purpose. It was like a young cow that had to be perfect for a *sacrifice (Numbers 19:2).

Verses 7-8 The crowd were probably following a custom when they spread their clothes on the road. John's *Gospel says that they carried 'palm' branches (John 12:13). (A palm is a kind of tree.) So Christians call the day Palm Sunday.

Verses 9-10 'Hosanna' is a word to praise God. It means 'Please save us now'. It would be an appeal to God to save his people from their enemies. The word comes from Psalm 118:25. '*Blessed is the man who comes' was a welcome for people who were coming to a special day in Jerusalem. 'The man who comes' was also another name for the *Messiah. The crowd was not shouting 'Hosanna' only as a cry of praise. They were asking God to save his people from the *Romans now that their *Messiah had come. Jesus showed that he rode in peace. But they did not understand.

Verse 11 Jesus rode down the *Mount of *Olives. He crossed the Kidron valley and he went into Jerusalem. He looked round at everything in the *Temple. He was deciding what to do there next. But he went to Bethany, where he probably stayed with his friends. He could be quiet and he could gain strength from God. His friends would encourage him.

The *fig tree without fruit 11:12-14; 20-21

The account of the *fig tree is in two parts. The account of Jesus' action in the *Temple comes in between the parts. There is an important link with what happened to the *fig tree. And Mark shows us that.

The *fig tree, Part 1 11:12-14

v12 The next day, as Jesus and his *disciples came from Bethany, he was hungry. **v13** Jesus saw a *fig tree in the distance. It was full of leaves. He went to see if he could find any fruit on it. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves. It was not the season for *figs. **v14** Jesus said to the tree, 'I do not want anyone ever to eat fruit from you again!' And his *disciples heard what he said.

Verse 12 Jesus was a real man, who became hungry.

Verse 13 There is a difficulty in the words 'It was not the season for *figs.' It does not seem right that Jesus should blame the tree for having no fruit then. But a *fig tree was a way to speak about the nation of the *Jewish people.

'When I saw your fathers, they were like a *fig tree with its early fruit on it' (Hosea 9:10). There is a *parable in Luke 13:6-9. It is about a *fig tree. The owner gave the tree a last chance to yield fruit. Jesus warned people that they needed to *repent. Then he told that *parable afterwards. It is probable that Mark's story is an acted *parable. The fruit is like a picture of the *obedience that the *Jewish people should have shown to God. The leaves are like a picture of their religion. Their religion gave a false hope. The *Jews had many *religious rules and ceremonies as the tree had many leaves. As Jesus looked in vain for *figs, God looked in vain for good behaviour and sincere *worship. The *Jews should have shown that they were ready to give a welcome to their *Messiah.

Verse 14 Jesus was warning the people very seriously. They were obeying the traditions and rules of their religion. But they were not changing their behaviour. They were not doing the things that God wanted them to do. They were not really serving God. And they were refusing to accept the *Messiah whom God had sent.

Jesus used the *fig tree as a type of *prophecy. He was showing what would happen in the future. Soon, the *Jewish people would suffer greatly. There would be great troubles for them when the *Romans destroyed Jerusalem in *AD 70. So, it was very important for the *Jewish people to trust God now.

The story that follows is about Jesus in the *Temple. And it shows how the *religious leaders wanted to get money from people. They would not allow *Gentiles the opportunity to pray. Their religion was a matter of ceremonies only and it made no difference to their way of life. They did not produce the 'fruit' of a good and sincere *faith.

Jesus in the *Temple 11:15-19

v15 They came to Jerusalem. Jesus entered the *Temple. And he began to force out those people who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of the people who were changing money. He turned over the seats of the people who were selling birds. **v16** He would not allow anyone to carry anything through the *Temple court. **v17** Then he taught them. He said, 'The *scriptures say, "People will call my house a house of prayer for all the nations." But you have made it a cave for thieves.' **v18** The chief priests and the *scribes heard about this. They began to look for a way to kill Jesus. What he taught astonished the whole crowd. And so the chief priests and the *scribes were afraid of him. **v19** When evening came, Jesus and his *disciples left the city.

Verse 15 The outer court was the only part of the *Temple where *Gentiles could go to pray. There was a wall that prevented them from entering the *Jewish part. They would risk their lives if they tried to pass it. But this 'Court of the *Gentiles' had become more like a market place. The *Jews paid a tax of a certain amount of money to the *Temple each year. But it had to be in special coins and not coins from other countries. The people who were changing the money were charging too much. People could buy birds for *sacrifice in Jerusalem. But the priests claimed that people could buy perfect birds in the *Temple and nowhere else. So they charged high prices for them. The priests were responsible for all this trade. And the priests were even using God's holy *Temple as a place where they cheated people.

Verse 16 People were also using the court as a short way from one side of the city to another. They were carrying their goods through it as if it were a public road.

Verse 17 Jesus used words from Isaiah (56:7). They showed that the *Jews were not allowing *Gentiles to *worship in God's 'house'. He also spoke Jeremiah's words (Jeremiah 7:11). They describe wicked people who came to the *Temple to *worship.

Verse 18 The *religious leaders realised that Jesus had become a danger to their authority. He had also disturbed their ways to get money. What Jesus taught astonished many people. So the authorities had to find a way to kill Jesus. But they wanted a way that would not cause trouble from the crowd.

Verse 19 It is possible that Jesus and his *disciples returned to Bethany for the night.

The *fig tree, Part 2 11:20-21

v20 In the morning, as they walked along, they saw the *fig tree. It had dried up all the way to its roots. **v21** Peter remembered. He said to Jesus, 'Teacher, look! The *fig tree that you *cursed has dried up!'

Verse 21 Peter said that Jesus had '*cursed' the tree. Nobody would eat fruit from the tree again. For three years, Jesus had taught the people about God. But now that time was ending. If they refused to believe God's message, they would not avoid God's punishment.

Many people who listened to Jesus never really believed his message. They had their own religion, but they would not serve God. Jesus had warned them many times about such attitudes. 'Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord", shall enter the *kingdom of heaven. It is only he who does the will of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 7:21).

Jesus teaches about prayer 11:22-25

v22 Jesus answered them, 'Believe in God. **v23** I tell you the truth. Suppose that one of you says to this mountain, "Go and throw yourself into the sea." You must not have doubt in your mind. You must believe that it will happen. Then it will happen for you. **v24** Therefore I tell you this. When you pray for anything, you must believe. Believe that you have already received it. Then you will receive it. **v25** You may be standing and praying. Then, forgive anyone who has behaved wrongly towards you. So your Father in heaven will forgive your *sins.' [**v26** 'But if you do not forgive them, your Father will not forgive you.']

Verse 22 These words about *faith may have been a suitable end to the account of the *fig tree. Jesus knew that the *fig tree would die. The *disciples must continue to trust God whatever happened.

Verses 23-24 Jesus may have pointed to the *Mount of *Olives as he said 'this' mountain. It would have made his words easy to remember. The 'mountain' is picture language for any kind of difficulty that seems impossible to remove. Matthew has similar words (17:20), but they are in a different place in his *Gospel. The 'mountain' can be a personal difficulty or even a difficulty between nations.

Jesus said that the answer to prayer depended on *faith. There must be complete confidence that God will answer. 'Anything' would not include a selfish or foolish prayer.

Verse 25 *Jews usually stood in order to pray.

Mark shows that he knew the words of the *Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4). It is essential to forgive other people. God is Love. We might approach God in prayer with a *spirit that is not willing to show love. But that is of no use. There can be no real communication between God and a man who does not forgive. That is because God does forgive. We do not deserve that God should forgive us. So we must forgive other people when they do not deserve it.

[Verse 26] is probably a copy of Matthew 6:15. Modern translations of Mark's *Gospel usually leave it out.

The question about Jesus' authority 11:27-33

v27 They came again to Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking in the *Temple, the chief priests, *scribes and the other leaders came to him. **v28** They said to him, 'By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you authority to do them?' **v29** Jesus answered them, 'I will ask you a question. Answer me. Then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. **v30** Was John's authority to *baptise from heaven, or merely human? Answer me.' **v31** The *religious leaders argued with each other. 'If we say, "from heaven", he will say, "Why then did you not believe John?" **v32** But we dare not say, "It was merely human." ' Really, they were afraid of the people. All the people thought that John was a real *prophet. **v33** So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' Jesus replied, 'Then I will not tell you by what authority I do these things, either.'

Verse 27 The chief priests, *scribes and other leaders were members of the *Sanhedrin, the *Jewish ruling group.

Verse 28 They intended to test Jesus with this question. He had cleared the Court of the *Gentiles of the merchants and of those who changed money. They wanted to know whose authority he had for that. Maybe Jesus would say that his authority came from God. Then they could say that he was insulting God. They would say that God would never allow a man to turn over anything in the *Temple. Maybe Jesus would say that he was acting on his own authority. Then he might lose public support. The *Sanhedrin could stop him from teaching in the *Temple courts without their authority.

Verses 29-30 Jesus did not give them an immediate answer. He asked a question about the authority of John the *Baptist to do his work.

Verse 31 Jesus had asked a question that the *religious leaders could not answer. They could not say that John was a genuine *prophet. Because then Jesus could ask them why they had not believed John.

Verse 32 They were afraid to say that John acted on his own authority. The crowd who were listening might have caused trouble. People had believed that John was a *prophet. So the *religious leaders could not answer.

Verse 33 Jesus said that they had refused to answer his question. So, he would not answer theirs. John the *Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus and John pointed to him as the *Messiah. But the authorities refused to believe John. So, it was of no use for Jesus to declare his own authority.

Chapter 12

The *parable of the *tenants in the *vineyard 12:1-12

v1 Jesus began to speak to them in *parables. 'A man planted *grape *vines in his *vineyard. He planted a hedge round it. He dug a big hole in which to press the *grapes. He built a tall building from which to watch over the land. He let the *vineyard to some *tenants. Then he went away to another country. **v2** At the right time, he sent a slave in order to receive from the *tenants his share of the fruit. **v3** But the *tenants struck the slave and they sent him away without anything. **v4** The owner sent them another slave. But they hurt his head and they behaved very badly towards him. **v5** The owner sent another slave. The *tenants killed him. He sent many other slaves. They struck some of them and they killed other slaves. **v6** The owner still had one more person to send. It was his son, whom he loved very much. The owner sent him last of all. He said, "They will respect my son." **v7** But the *tenants said to each other, "This man will receive his father's property after his father dies. Let us kill him. Then the property will be ours." **v8** So they took him and they killed him. They threw him out of the *vineyard. **v9** I will tell you what the owner of the *vineyard will do then. He will come and he will kill the *tenants. He will give the *vineyard to other people. **v10** Surely you have read what the *Scriptures say! "The stone that the builders did not accept became the most important stone in the building. **v11** The *Lord has done this. We think that this is wonderful." **v12** The *religious leaders looked for a way to arrest Jesus. They knew that he had told the *parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd. So they left Jesus and they went away.

Verse 1 A *parable usually has only one main teaching point. But this story has several points. Writers call this story an 'allegory'. An allegory is a story in which each part contains a separate lesson.

A *vineyard was picture language for the *Jewish nation. Isaiah had used this picture in his 'Song about the *Vineyard' (Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus described the care that the owner had taken. There was a hedge to keep out wild animals. The tower was a small building where the workers stored the wine. At harvest time, the workers would look out from the platform in order to guard the crop from thieves. The *grape juice flowed into the large hole after the workers had pressed the *grapes with their feet. God was like the owner of the *vineyard. He had done everything necessary to protect the *Jewish nation. They should have been a nation that produced the 'fruit' of good lives.

In Jesus' time, there were often owners who went away. They left their *vineyards in the care of *tenants. The *tenants would pay the owner rent, either in money or in a share of the crop. The *Jewish leaders were like the *tenants. God had trusted them to obey him. They should have given him the 'fruit' of good lives.

Verses 2-5 The slaves who went to collect the harvest were like the *prophets. God had sent them on many occasions to demand sincere *worship. The rulers of the *Jewish nation had refused to respect the *prophets. They insulted Amos (Amos 7:12). They made fun of Jeremiah. They struck him and they put him in prison (Jeremiah 20:7; 37:15). They killed Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). God showed great patience when he sent the *prophets. He gave the *Jewish people every opportunity to do what was right.

Verse 6 In the end, God sent 'his son, whom he loved'. God used these words about Jesus when John the *Baptist *baptised him (Mark 1:11). They show that Jesus was the *Messiah. In the *parable, the *tenants murdered the son. So, Jesus knew what was going to happen to him.

Verses 7-9 The *tenants believed that the owner was far away or even dead. But the owner returned to punish them. Many people still think that they are free to act against God. But God knows what they are doing. They forget that. God is very patient, but one day he will act in judgement.

God would be the judge of the people who refused to obey his message. They would receive their punishment. And God would choose other people to serve him. They would come from every nation. And God would make these people into his holy nation. They would become his royal priests (1 Peter 2:9).

Verses 10-11 Jesus used words from Psalm 118:22. Jesus was like the stone. The *Jewish leaders were like the builders. At first, they thought that the stone had no value. But it became the most important stone in the building. This might be the stone that united two parts at the top of the building. Or it was a corner stone. A corner stone unites two walls at the base of the building in order to give it a strong foundation. Many *Jewish leaders refused to accept Jesus. But he became the strong foundation of the Christian church. Other early Christian writers also used these words from Psalm 118 (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7; Ephesians 2:20).

Verse 12 The *religious leaders realised that Jesus had told this story about them. They were the 'wicked *tenants'. They wanted to arrest Jesus, but they were too afraid of the crowd. They were afraid for their own safety. And if the crowd tried to prevent them from arresting Jesus, they might disturb the peace. Then there would be trouble from the *Romans.

The question about paying taxes to Caesar 12:13-17

v13 The *religious leaders sent some of the *Pharisees and some of the *Herodians to Jesus. They wanted a chance to accuse him about something that he said. **v14** They came to him and they said, 'Teacher, you are a man who speaks the truth. We know that. You do not let other people's opinions about you make a difference. You teach the truth about the way of God, whomever you are speaking to. Is it against the Law to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? **v15** Should we pay them, or should we not?' But Jesus knew what they were trying to do. He said to them, 'I know that you are testing me. Bring me a coin and let me look at it.' **v16** And they brought one. Jesus said to them, 'Whose image is this? And whose name is on it?' They said to him, 'Caesar's'. **v17** Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Give to God what belongs to God.' Jesus' reply astonished them.

Verse 13 The *Pharisees and the *Herodians had already united in order to plot against Jesus (Mark 3:6). The *Pharisees considered the *Romans enemies. The *Herodians were a group with political ambitions, so they were friendly with the *Romans.

Verse 14 They began by praising Jesus, although they did not really respect him. But what they said about Jesus was true. He did not change his views in order to gain support. He was sincere in everything that he said.

The tax that they asked about was a tax on each person. Everyone had to pay a personal tax of one denarius to the great ruler in Rome every year. A denarius was a man's wage for a day. The *Jews hated it because they were not a free nation. They had to pay the tax with a silver coin. The coin had the name of the great ruler in Rome on it. When this tax began in *AD 6, the *Jews were extremely angry. Judas from Galilee led *Jews to fight against the tax (Acts 5:37). Although the *Romans soon stopped his resistance, the Eager Men continued to plot against the *Romans. (See the note about Mark 3:18.)

The question was like a clever trap. Jesus might say that *Jews should pay the tax. Then, he would lose his popularity. People would think that he was not being loyal to his own nation. Jesus might say that they should not pay. Then, he would be in trouble with the *Romans.

Verse 16 Jesus did not have a coin himself, but the *Pharisees and *Herodians produced one. Tiberius Caesar was the great ruler in Rome at that time. His image and his name were on the silver coin with which the *Jews had to pay the tax.

Verse 17 They had asked whether they should 'pay' taxes to Caesar. Jesus told them to 'pay back' what belonged to Caesar. Taxes were not a gift to the state. They were a debt that they owed. The coin belonged to Caesar, from whom they received benefits. The *Romans made good roads. They kept peace and they made society work better. Therefore, people should be willing to pay for what the state did for them. But men belong to God because he created them (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, they should give God the honour and service that is his right. Paul said that ruling authorities have God's authority (Romans 13:1-2). So, Christians' duty to the state is part of their duty to God. But if the law of the state is against God's laws, then duty to God must come first. Daniel served the king. But he refused to stop praying to God when there was a law against praying to anyone except the king (Daniel 6:6-10). Peter told the *Jewish leaders, 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29).

Jesus showed great wisdom as he avoided the 'trap' in the question. And he spoke with great authority. And so he astonished everyone.

The question about life after death 12:18-27

v18 *Sadducees came to Jesus. They believed that there is no life after death. They asked Jesus a question. They said, **v19** 'Teacher, Moses wrote this law for us. "A man may die and leave a wife with no children. Then, his brother must marry the widow. This is so that he can have children for his brother." **v20** There were seven brothers. The first one married. But, when he died, he left no children. **v21** The second one married her, and he died. But he left no children. The third brother did the same. **v22** The seven brothers left no children. Last of all, the woman died too. **v23** In the *resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven brothers had married the widow!

v24 Jesus replied, 'You are wrong because you do not know the *Scriptures. And you do not know the power of God. **v25** When men and women rise from death, they will not marry. Nor will their parents give them in marriage. They will be like the *angels in heaven. **v26** And now about whether dead people will rise to life. Surely you have read in the book of Moses the story about the bush. God said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob." **v27** He is not God of dead people, but of those who are alive. You are quite wrong.'

Verse 18 The *Sadducees were a powerful group in the *Jewish *Sanhedrin. Most of them were priests. The *chief priest was a *Sadducee. They were wealthy, and they did not oppose the *Romans. They agreed with only the first five books of the *Old Testament. They said that there was no evidence for life after death in these books.

They did not believe in *angels. They did not agree with the traditions of the *Pharisees.

The *Sadducees came with a question that would make people laugh at Jesus. They did not ask in order to find out the true answer to a problem.

Verses 19-23 Moses gave a law called 'levirate' marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). A brother or close relative had to marry a widow so that she could have children. Then the dead man's name and family would continue if a child was born. People then thought of the child as the child of the original husband. The story that the *Sadducees told had its origin in this law.

Verse 24 Jesus said that the *Sadducees did not know the *Scriptures. They did not understand a passage in one of first five books of the *Old Testament! Jesus explained this as part of his answer to their question. They were also denying God's power to create life.

Verse 25 Jesus said first that life in heaven would not be the same as life on earth. He said that there is no need for marriage in heaven. One of the purposes of marriage is to have children in order to continue the human race. But in heaven, men and women will be like *angels, who do not die. Friendships in heaven will be even more wonderful than those on earth. When Jesus brought *angels into his answer, he showed the *Sadducees another truth. They did not believe in *angels.

Verse 26 Jesus then used a passage from Exodus. That was a book that the *Sadducees agreed with. When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, he used the words, 'I am'. He said, 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (Exodus 3:1-6). God did not say, 'I was'. These *ancestors of the *Jews had died a long time before Moses. But they were still alive with God. Real life is a friendship with God that nothing can end. The death of the physical body makes no difference. The friendship continues. Jesus promised his *disciples, 'Because I live, you will live also' (John 14:19). Paul knew that this is true. He knew that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39).

Verse 27 Jesus had proved to the *Sadducees that they were quite wrong. They were wrong to deny the belief in *resurrection. They were taking no notice of their own *Scriptures. They were denying that God is *eternal. And his love never ends.

The question about the most important *commandment 12:28-34

v28 One of the *scribes came near. And he heard what the *Sadducees were discussing with Jesus. He noticed that Jesus had given them a good answer. So he asked Jesus, 'Which is the most important of all the *commandments?' **v29** Jesus answered, 'The first one is, "Listen, Israel (*Jewish people). The *Lord our God, the Lord, is one Lord. **v30** You shall love the *Lord your God with all your heart and with all your *soul. You shall love him with all your mind and with all your strength." **v31** This is the second one, "You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself." There is no other *commandment more important than these.' **v32** The *scribe said, 'You are right, Teacher. You have said truly that there is one God. There is no other God but he. **v33** To love God with all your heart and mind and strength is very important. So is to love your neighbour as you love yourself. These things are much more important than all burnt gifts to God and *sacrifices.' **v34** Jesus saw that the man answered well. He said to the man, 'You are not far from God's *kingdom.'

From that time, nobody dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

Verse 28 The *scribe would have been pleased that Jesus had answered the *Sadducees so well. He was a teacher of the law and he did not agree with the *Sadducees' beliefs. His question was a matter that the teachers of the law often discussed. They said that there were 365 commands about what they must not do. There were over 200 commands about what they must do.

Verses 29-30 The first command that Jesus gave him was the Shema. The Shema is still important to the *Jews today. The word 'Shema' means 'Listen', and it is the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4. This verse was so important that the *Jews wrote it on tiny pieces of paper. They fixed them in a small box on their door-posts. This was to remind them that there is one God. It reminded them when they went out. And it reminded them when they came in.

They had to love God with all their thoughts and actions.

Verse 31 The word for 'love' of a neighbour is the *Greek word 'agape'. It does not mean the same as the pleasure of being with a friend. It means to want the best things for the neighbour. It means that we help neighbours. We help them, even if they do not give love in return. They may not show that they are grateful. But we still help them. The *Jews would have thought that 'neighbour' meant another *Jew. Jesus showed that a neighbour could be anyone. It was anyone who needed help (Luke 10:29-37). Jesus used the words of Leviticus 19:18 with the Shema. He was showing that love for a neighbour comes from love for God.

'as you love yourselves'. We love ourselves as we look after our bodies. We love ourselves when we use our minds. We even have to forgive ourselves when God forgives us.

Verse 33 The *scribe agreed that the love of God and of neighbour was very important. It was more important than *religious ceremonies. God requires men to love and to obey him rather than to offer *sacrifices. The *prophets had emphasised that. Samuel told Saul, 'to obey is better than to offer *sacrifice' (1 Samuel 15:22). Hosea wrote that God says, 'I desire love and not *sacrifice' (Hosea 6:6).

Verse 34 Jesus encouraged the *scribe. Jesus said that he was 'not far' from God's *kingdom. He had understood Jesus' answer. He still had to make the decision to follow Jesus.

The question about the *Messiah 12:35-37

v35 Jesus was teaching in the *Temple courts. He asked, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the Son of David? **v36** The *Holy Spirit spoke by means of David. David said, "The *Lord said to my *Lord, 'Sit at my right side, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" **v37** David himself calls him " *Lord". So how can the Christ be David's son?'

The large crowd listened to Jesus with eager interest.

Verse 35 Jesus asked a question that was a puzzle. The 'son of David' was a way to describe the *Messiah. Blind Bartimaeus called to him in this way. Jesus was not denying that he came from the family of David. The *angel promised Mary that her son would be a king from David's family (Luke 1:32). Zechariah sang about the man who would make it possible for God to *save people. He said that he would be 'in the house of God's servant David' (Luke 1:69). Luke shows that Jesus came from David's family (Luke 3:31). But Jesus wanted to show what the title 'Son of David' meant as a name for the *Messiah. The popular idea was that the *Messiah would be a soldier and king like David. He would defeat the *Romans and other nations and he would make the *Jewish nation an important political power.

Verse 36 Psalm 110 is one of the Psalms that David wrote. The *Jews believed that the Psalm was about the *Messiah. In verse 1, David refers to the *Messiah as his '*Lord'. Jesus asked how the *Messiah could be David's son if he was David's '*Lord'. He wanted to show that the *Messiah was much greater than David. God would give the *Messiah the place of honour. He would sit at 'God's right side' until all his enemies suffered defeat. An enemy in Jesus' time had to lie on the ground. Then the man who had defeated him could put his feet on the man's neck.

Verse 37 The title 'Son of David' therefore means more than a military ruler. The *Messiah would be a king from the family of David. But he would be a king of peace. He would rule over people's minds and lives.

The words about the interest of the crowd may belong at the beginning of the next section.

Jesus warns against the teachers of the law 12:38-40

v38 As he taught, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk about in long coats. They like to receive greetings in the market place. **v39** They love to have the most important seats in the *Jewish meeting places. And they love to have places of honour at *feasts. **v40** They rob widows of their property. They then say long prayers for a show. Their punishment will be more severe.'

Verse 38 Jesus warned the people about the teachers of the law. Unless the *disciples were careful, they might copy their wrong behaviour. A long coat was the sign of an educated person who did not have to work with his hands. He could walk with no need to hurry. The teachers dressed in long coats in order to attract attention. They liked the people to greet them with honour. Perhaps the people called them 'Rabbi' (teacher). The word actually means 'My great master'.

Verse 39 The front seats in the meeting place for important people were those in front of the special cupboard. That cupboard contained the *scriptures. The teachers liked these because everyone would be able to see them. At the *feasts, the places of honour were those nearest to the host.

Verse 40 A teacher of the law should have worked to feed himself. He should not ask for money for explaining the law. But the teachers persuaded the people that it was an honour to make gifts to them. God would reward them if they gave generously. They cheated widows. They persuaded them to make large gifts that the widows could not afford. Then the teachers tried to seem very *religious. They said long prayers in public. God would punish them most severely because they were proud. And they loved money. Their religion was not sincere and their example was dangerous.

The widow's gift 12:41-44

The widow's gift is very different from the gifts of the teachers of the law. They wanted to gain. The widow wanted to give.

v41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where people put their gifts of money for the *Temple. He watched the crowd as they put their money into the collecting boxes. Many rich people put in large amounts. **v42** A poor widow came and she put in two copper coins. They were worth a quarter of a penny. **v43** Jesus called his *disciples to him. He said to them, 'What I am going to say to you is true. This poor widow has put more than all those who made gifts of money. **v44** They offered a lot, because they are rich. But she gave, although she is poor. She has put in everything that she had to live on.'

Verse 41 In the Court of the Women in the *Temple there were 13 boxes. They were wide at the base and narrow at the top. People put money in them. And the money helped to pay for *sacrifices or other *Temple costs. Many people threw in large sums. But they had plenty of money left.

Verse 42 The widow's two coins were 'lepta'. A 'lepton' was the smallest of all coins. Its name meant 'the thin thing'. It had a very tiny value.

Verses 43-44 Jesus told his *disciples that the widow's gift was really very generous. It was more generous than the gifts of those who gave large amounts. They had given what they could easily afford. And they still had money to spare. She gave at great cost to herself.

Chapter 13

Jesus warns his *disciples about the future 13:1-37

The *Temple at Jerusalem will come to an end 13:1-2

v1 As Jesus came out of the *Temple, one of his *disciples said, 'Look, Teacher. What wonderful stones! What wonderful buildings!' **v2** Jesus said to him, 'You see all these great buildings! Not a single stone will remain upon another stone. Men will throw every stone down.'

Verse 1 Herod the Great began to build the *Temple in about 20 *BC. It was not complete until *AD 63. It was a magnificent building. Herod had made it out of white stone. Some of the foundation stones were enormous. Gold covered the front of the building and it reflected the sun. The *Temple was the place of *worship for *Jews from all over the world. The *Jews could not imagine that anything could happen to their *Temple. It gave them a feeling of security. The *Temple was there. So they believed that God would never leave them.

Verse 2 Jesus' words came true in *AD 70. The *Romans destroyed Jerusalem completely. The place where the *Temple had been became no more than a field. 'Future visitors would not believe that the city had ever been there' (Josephus, 'The history of the *Jewish war').

The beginning of troubles 13:3-8

v3 Jesus was sitting on the *Mount of *Olives opposite the *Temple. Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him a question in private. **v4** 'Tell us, when will this be? What will be the sign that all these things will come true?' **v5** Jesus began to say to them, 'Watch out! Be careful that nobody makes you believe their wrong ideas. **v6** Many men will come. And they will say that they have my authority. They will say, "I am (he)." They will turn many people from the right way. **v7** Do not be afraid when you hear about wars and possible future wars. This must happen first. But the end is not immediately. **v8** Nation will fight against nation. *Kingdom will fight against *kingdom. The earth will shake in various places. There will be lack of food. This is only the beginning of the "birth pains".'

Verse 3 To sit was the usual way for a master to teach his *disciples. From the *Mount of *Olives, there is a wonderful view across the Kidron Valley to Jerusalem city.

Verse 4 The *disciples wanted to know when Jesus' *prophecy about the *Temple would come true. The idea that men would destroy Jerusalem was terrible. So, the *disciples may have thought that the end of the world was coming. The *Messiah will stand on the *Mount of *Olives after he has defeated all his enemies. The *prophet Zechariah wrote about that (Zechariah 14:4). They were therefore also asking about the sign of the end of the world.

Jesus gave the *disciples three signs that will happen before God's final judgement:

1 False *Messiahs

Verses 5-6 Some people will say that they are the *Messiah. The *Greek words for 'I am' are the name that Jesus used for himself. 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:58). 'I am' is the name that God gave for himself (Exodus 3:14). Judas from Galilee and Theudas tried to lead people against the *Romans (Acts 5:36-37). In *AD 132, Bar Cochba called himself *Messiah. There have been other people until the present day who make false statements about their authority from God. Some false *Messiahs say that they know the time of the end of the world. Jesus says that only God knows that (Matthew 24:36).

2 Wars

Verses 7-8 Wars between nations will happen during all the time between Jesus' first and second coming. But the *disciples must not be afraid. God loves them and he is in control of events. Wars will not be a sign of the immediate end.

3 *Earthquakes or a serious lack of food

Verse 8 Less than 40 years after Jesus' *prophecy, an *earthquake destroyed Laodicea. In *AD 62, *Mount Vesuvius in Italy threw out hot melted rock that buried Pompeii. The Christians for whom Mark was writing would know about this. There was a serious lack of food in the time when Claudius was the great ruler in Rome (Acts 11:28).

*Jews used picture language of a woman in pain because she was beginning to give birth to a new life. It was the sign of the troubles for the *Jewish nation that would bring about a new beginning (Micah 4:9-10).

All these signs would come before the end of the world. They were not the end itself. Paul had to warn the Christians in Thessalonica to do their work. Some were neglecting their duties. They expected that Jesus would return very soon. Some even said that he had already come (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

Jesus says that the *disciples will suffer 13:9-13

These verses describe the trouble from enemies that Jesus' *disciples must expect. But Jesus encourages them by promises of God's help and protection.

v9 'Watch out! People will hand you over to the courts. They will strike you in the *Jewish meeting places. You will stand in front of rulers and kings because of me. There you will be a witness to me. **v10** And people must *preach the *gospel to all nations first. **v11** They will arrest you and take you to court. Do not be anxious before then about what you will say. Say whatever God gives you to say at the time. It is not you who will be speaking, but the *Holy Spirit. **v12** Brothers will hand over brothers, whom the authorities will kill. A father will hand over his child. Children will hand over their parents for death. **v13** Everyone will hate you because of me. But God will save the person who lasts to the end.'

Verse 9 The 'courts' and *Jewish meeting places refer to trouble from the *Jews. The *Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the chief court. But the *Jewish meeting places were also courts of law. They could whip a man if they had shown him to be guilty in such a court. 'Rulers and kings' refers to trouble from *Gentiles. In such situations, the *disciples would have the opportunity to talk about their *faith in Jesus. Peter spoke with courage to the *Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-13). Paul stood in front of Felix and Festus (Acts chapters 23-25). In Rome, he spoke about Christ to the soldiers who guarded him (Philippians 1:12-13).

Verse 10 They must make sure that as many people as possible hear the *gospel. They must include everyone, *Gentiles as well as *Jews. The end will not come until they have completed their task.

Verse 11 They must not worry when they have to stand in court. The *Holy Spirit will give them the right words to say.

Verse 12 To be loyal to Jesus can cause disagreements in a family. Jesus had warned about that (Luke 12:51-53). Trouble can come even from close relatives. 'Brothers' can mean brothers by birth or close relatives. To be loyal to Jesus might cause pain and troubles. Some *disciples would suffer death for their *faith. In the early church, the *Jews killed Stephen. Herod Antipas made his soldiers kill James the brother of John (Acts 7:54-60; 12:2). In many parts of the world today, Christians suffer trouble from enemies. Authorities put them in prison and even kill them.

Verse 13 People hated Christ. Therefore, they will hate those who obey him (John 15:18-19). There was a reason why Jesus emphasised this. Some *Jews believed that God always helped good people to avoid pain and troubles. Some people today think that Christians should not have any problems. But it is not true. Christians will not always be healthy and successful. Christians suffer difficulties in the same way as other people who do not obey God. And they suffer for their *faith as well.

But everything that happens is in God's control. This knowledge should encourage Jesus' *disciples to remain loyal. 'To the end' has three possible meanings:

- 1 'Until God has finished his work on earth'. Some Christians will still be alive when Jesus returns (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).
- 2 'Until the end of life from natural causes'.
- 3 'Until other people may even kill Christians'.

God will give a welcome into his *eternal *kingdom to those people who remain loyal (Revelation 2:10).

Jerusalem will fall 13:14-23

v14 'You will see the "awful thing that causes disgust". It will stand where it does not belong.' (The reader should understand what this means.) 'Then anyone in Judea should escape to the mountains. **v15** Nobody on the roof should go down into his house in order to take anything out. **v16** Nobody in the field should go back in order to get his coat. **v17** How awful it will be in those days for *pregnant women! How awful for mothers who still have babies at their breasts! **v18** Pray that this will not happen in winter. **v19** Those days will be worse than any other days from the time that God created the world until now. And there will never be any days like them again. **v20** If the *Lord had not cut the time short, nobody would live. But he has made the time shorter because of the people whom he has chosen. **v21** Then someone may say to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "Look, there he is!" Do not believe it. **v22** False *Christs and false *prophets will appear. They will show signs and *miracles. They will try to cheat the people whom God has chosen, if possible. **v23** But watch out. I have told you everything before the time.'

Verse 14 'The awful thing that causes disgust' are words from the book of Daniel (9:27). In 168 *BC, the *Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes defeated the *Jews. He then put a *Greek *altar in the *Temple in Jerusalem. He put an image of Zeus, the chief *Greek god, in the Holy Place. In *AD 40, the mad ruler Caligula planned to put an image of himself in the *Temple. Fortunately, he died in *AD 41, before he could carry out his plan. When Titus destroyed the *Temple in *AD 70, the *Roman soldiers put their military flags there.

Jesus may have meant any future time when people will be completely loyal to anyone or anything other than God. The *Jews expected a power that was completely evil. Paul called this power 'the man of *sin'. This 'man of *sin' would set himself up in God's *temple and he would demand *worship (2 Thessalonians 2:2-4).

'The reader should understand what this means'. Perhaps Jesus meant when Jerusalem and its *Temple would be destroyed by the *Romans. Mark may have believed that, anyway. Perhaps this is why he did not explain clearly. It might have been dangerous for the Christians to speak about such an idea. They were already suffering because of their *faith.

Because of what Jesus had said, Christians left Jerusalem. The writer Eusebius says that they went to Pella. Pella was a city on the other side of the River Jordan. Other people crowded into the city at Jerusalem. They thought that its strong walls and its *Temple would protect them from the *Romans. But, in *AD 70, Titus camped outside the city for five months. He waited for the people to starve to death. The *Jewish writer Josephus described the terrible troubles of all those people in the city who could not get food.

Verses 15-16 When the first signs of trouble came, people must hurry to escape. They must not wait to collect their goods from the house. They must not return from the fields to collect a coat. This reminds us about Lot's wife. When she looked back, she died (Genesis 19:26).

Verse 17 Jesus thought especially about the troubles of mothers with tiny babies and with children who were not yet born. It would be very hard for mothers to watch their babies die of hunger.

Verse 18 People who were trying to escape in the winter would find very little shelter from the weather. Food would be difficult to find. The river bottoms that dried up in the summer would be full of water. They would not be able to cross over them.

Verse 19 These words come from the book of Daniel (12:1). They were true of the terrible troubles when the *Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Thousands of people died and the *Romans took thousands more as prisoners into other countries.

But these words also refer to a time of great troubles before the 'last days'.

Verse 20 The words may refer to when the *Romans destroyed Jerusalem in *AD 70. Or they may refer to the end of the world. But they mean the same. God will make the time of trouble shorter because he controls events in the world. He will not allow anyone to destroy the people whom he has chosen. 'The people whom God has chosen' were the *Jews. But the members of the Christian church are now 'the people whom God has chosen' as well.

Verses 21-22 Jesus warns the *disciples about false *prophets who could even perform signs and *miracles (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). 'False *Christs' perhaps means those who oppose Christ. False *Christs can also mean those who claim to be Christians. But they teach wrong things to *disciples. They would teach them to do wrong things. John writes about 'many false *Christs' (1 John 2:18).

Verse 23 Jesus had already warned his disciples (Mark 13:5). Now he repeated what he had said to them. They would have greater strength to oppose false ideas because Jesus had prepared them. And they would have greater strength to suffer troubles

When the Son of Man comes 13:24-27

v24 'In those days, there will be terrible troubles. After that, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not shine. **v25** The stars will fall from the sky. The powers of the sky will shake out of their places. **v26** Then they will see the Son of Man as he comes in clouds with great power and light. **v27** Then he will send out his *angels. He will gather the people whom he has chosen from all four directions of the earth. He will bring them from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.'

Verses 24-25 The *Old Testament *prophets often spoke about signs in the sky that would come before God's judgement day. There will be darkness because there will be no light from the sun, moon or stars (Isaiah 13:10; 34:4). 'The powers of the sky' means the sun, moon and stars. Something like an *earthquake will disturb them from their natural places.

Verse 26 Daniel wrote, 'Someone who looked like a son of man came in the clouds of the sky' (Daniel 7:13). Jesus spoke about his second coming in words like these. A 'cloud' is a sign that God is there (Exodus 13:21, Mark 9:7). The great honour and beauty with which Jesus will come is the great honour and beauty of God the Father.

The need to be ready for Christ's coming 13:28-37

v28 'Learn a lesson from the *fig tree. When its branches go soft, the leaves appear. Then you know that summer is near. **v29** In the same way, you will see these things happen. Then you will know that he is near. He is right at the door. **v30** I tell you the truth. People now alive will not have died until all these things have happened. **v31** Heaven and earth will pass away. But my words will never pass away.

v32 Nobody knows about the day or the hour. Not even the *angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows. **v33** Be careful! Keep awake! You do not know when the time will come. **v34** It is like a man who goes on a journey. He leaves his house and he puts his servants in charge. Each servant has his work to do. The master orders the servant at the door to keep watching. **v35** So keep watching. You do not know when the master of the house will come back. It may be in the evening or at midnight. It may be when the male chicken calls at dawn or in the morning. **v36** He may come without warning. And he may find you asleep. **v37** What I say to you, I say to everyone. "Watch!"'

Verse 28 They know that summer is near when the leaves begin to appear on the *fig tree. To sit under a *fig tree was a sign of peace when the *Messiah came (Micah 4:4).

Verse 29 The words 'these things' probably refer to the signs in the sky (verses 24-25). They will know that the *Lord will return very soon.

Verse 30 Many of Jesus' *disciples believed that Jesus would return during their life. Paul had to tell the Christians at Thessalonica to carry on their normal lives while they waited (1 Thessalonians 4:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12). In one way, Jesus did return very soon when he came at *Pentecost. He had promised his *disciples that he would not leave them without comfort (John 14:18). But the time when Jesus will return is still future. 'People now alive' may refer to the *Jews. If so, Jesus was saying that there would always be *Jews. But Jesus may have meant the kind of people who would be loyal to him. Then he was saying, 'There will always be people who really believe.'

Verse 31 Everything will pass away. But what Jesus taught is always true. It is important for everyone, wherever they live or whatever their age. Heaven and earth may be of no more use, like clothing that has worn out. But God never changes (James 1:17). Jesus, too, is always the same (Hebrews 1:10-12; 13:8).

Verse 32 Only God the Father knows the exact time when the Son of Man will come again. Jesus was God's Son, but, as a man, he himself did not know. Some people say that he will appear on a certain date. Or, they say that the world will end on a certain date. Those people are wrong, because nobody can know that.

Verse 33 Jesus warns his *disciples to be prepared.

Verse 34 He is like a man who has gone on a journey. But the man has not said quite when he would return. Like the servants in Jesus' story, each *disciple has his work to do. They are like the servants in the *parable about the three servants (Matthew 25:14-30).

Verses 35-37 Jesus may come at any time of day or night. He therefore emphasises the need to keep awake and ready. He will come suddenly. Jesus was not only warning the *disciples. He was warning everyone.

Chapter 14

The plot to kill Jesus 14:1-2

v1 It was two days before the *Passover and the *feast of *Unleavened Bread. The chief priests were looking for a way to arrest Jesus in secret. They wanted to kill him. **v2** They said, 'Not during the *feast. The people might cause trouble.'

Verse 1 The *Passover is a *feast. At that time, *Jews remember how God, by means of Moses, rescued the *Jewish people. He rescued them from Egypt, where they were slaves. It was on the 14th of the month of Nisan, which is about the middle of April. The *feast of *unleavened bread was once an agricultural *feast, when the barley harvest began. (Barley was a kind of corn.) But because it was from 15th-21st Nisan, the two *feasts joined to become one great *feast. *Jews came from all over the world to Jerusalem. The *Jewish writer Josephus estimated that as many as three million *Jews would be in the city for the *feast. Soldiers came from where they lived in Caesarea. They came in order to make sure that there was no trouble from an excited crowd. There were people who wanted freedom from Rome. It would be easy for them to begin to disturb the peace.

Verse 2 If the priests arrested Jesus in public, the crowd would be on his side. There would be trouble, and the *Romans would punish them. They might take away the power of the *Jewish leaders.

A woman *anoints Jesus 14:3-9

v3 Jesus was in Bethany. He was at the table in the house of Simon. Simon had a skin disease. A woman came with a jar of very expensive *perfume. It was called nard and it was pure. She broke the jar and she poured the *perfume over Jesus' head. **v4** Some of the people there became angry. They said to each other, 'The *perfume should not have been wasted like this. **v5** She could have sold this *perfume for more than a man's wages for one year. Poor people could have received the money.' So they blamed her. **v6** But Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. Stop worrying her! She has done a beautiful thing to me. **v7** You always have poor people among you. You can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. **v8** She has done what she could. She poured *perfume on my body in order to prepare me for *burial. **v9** What I tell you is true. People will remember what she has done. They will remember it, wherever people *preach the *gospel in the whole world.'

Verse 3 Simon would probably not have shared a meal if he still had a skin disease. Maybe he had recovered. Or perhaps Mark knew that he became ill later. Or perhaps it was in Simon's house but he was not there. Mark does not say who the woman was. John says that it was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:1-3). It was usual for a host to pour a few drops of *perfume on the head of his guests. This woman had a special jar that contained very expensive *perfume. This pure *perfume came from India. She broke the jar. She did so as a sign that she was using all the *perfume. She wanted to show her love by giving as much as possible. Also, people who *anointed the body of a dead person left the broken pieces of jar in the rock grave.

Verses 4-5 The people who were there estimated the value of the *perfume as more than 300 denarii. A denarius was a coin that paid a man's wages for a day. So, she was probably 'wasting' more than the wages for one year.

Verses 6-7 Jesus answered them with words from Deuteronomy (15:11). 'You will always have poor people with you.' They had plenty of opportunity to help poor people. But they did not have much more time to do anything for Jesus. Jesus did not mean that poor people must always be poor. Christians should work to remove the things that make people poor. And they should give generous help to those who are already poor.

Jesus said that the woman had done a good thing.

Verse 8 The *Jews *anointed kings. Samuel *anointed David (1 Samuel 16:13). Elisha sent a young man to *anoint Jehu (2 Kings 9:6). The word '*Messiah' means 'the *anointed man'. So the woman had shown by her action that Jesus was the *Messiah. He was the king that the *Jews had hoped for.

Jesus said that she had *anointed him before his *burial. Some women came to his grave in order to *anoint his body. But they could not do so. He had already risen from death (Mark 16:1-6).

Verse 9 Jesus knew that his *disciples would *preach the *gospel through the whole world. What the woman had done was good news in itself. She had shown that Jesus was king. He would be a king who would die. Her action also reminded Christians of the *resurrection that prevented the women from *anointing his body.

Judas plans to hand Jesus over 14:10-11

v10 Judas Iscariot was one of the 12 *apostles. He went to the chief priests in order to hand Jesus over to them. **v11** They were pleased when they heard that. They promised to give him money. Judas looked for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to his enemies.

Verses 1-2 and 10-11 record the priests' wish to kill Jesus and Judas's plan to help them. The story of the woman who *anointed Jesus comes in between. Mark contrasts the generous love of the woman with the hate of Jesus' enemies.

Verses 10-11 'One of the 12' emphasises how wicked Judas's action was. He should have been loyal to the Master who had chosen him specially. Jesus trusted him as a friend. Nobody knows why Judas agreed to help the priests. He would tell them where they could find Jesus away from the crowds.

Possible reasons why Judas agreed to help the priests are:

1 He may have wanted a lot of money. John says that Judas was in charge of the *disciples' money. He used to steal small amounts for himself (John 12:6). Thirty (30) pieces of silver was not a large sum of money. But Judas may have expected a larger reward. He asked the priests what they would give him. (See Matthew 26:15.)

2 His name 'Iscariot' may mean 'man from Kerioth'. Kerioth was in Judea. So, he was the only *apostle who did not come from Galilee. He was perhaps jealous of Peter, James and John. Only these three men had been with Jesus on some special occasions. Perhaps Judas thought that he deserved more honour. But Jesus had not given it to him.

3 He may have belonged to the 'Eager Men'. They wanted to free the nation from *Roman rule by force. Judas was disappointed that Jesus was not going to establish a political *kingdom on earth. He was hoping for an important place in that *kingdom. His selfish ambition made him turn against Jesus. Perhaps he wanted to cause a situation that would force Jesus to show his power. Judas thought that he knew what Jesus should do. He thought that he knew better than Jesus.

4 Judas could see that soon Jesus would be in serious trouble. So he helped the priests in order to protect himself.

Preparations for the *Passover meal 14:12-16

v12 It was the first day of the *Feast of *Unleavened Bread. It was the time when the priests *sacrificed the young sheep for *Passover. Jesus' *disciples said to him, 'We will get ready for you to eat the *Passover. Where do you want us to do that?' **v13** So Jesus sent two of his *disciples. He told them, 'Go into the city. A man who is carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him.' **v14** Wherever he goes into a house, say to the owner, "The Teacher says, 'Where is my guest room? Where can I eat the *Passover with my *disciples?' " **v15** He will show you a large upstairs room. It will be furnished and ready. Prepare for us to eat there.' **v16** The *disciples set out and they went into the city. They found things exactly as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the *Passover meal.

Verse 12 The first day of the *Feast of *Unleavened bread was on the 14th of the month called Nisan. *Jews had to remove every sign of *yeast from their houses. This was because the *Jews escaped from Egypt in a great hurry. They had no time to make bread with *yeast in it (Exodus 12:15-19). *Yeast makes bread rise. They killed the young sheep on 13th Nisan. A new *Jewish day began at 6 in the evening, after sunset. So 14th Nisan began at 6 in the evening on the 13th Nisan.

Verse 13 A man who was carrying a jar of water would be unusual. People who carried water had skin bottles. Women carried jars of water on their heads.

Verse 14 Jesus had made arrangements already. He probably wanted to prevent the authorities and Judas from knowing the place. He calls the room 'my' guest room.

Verse 15 An upstairs room would be suitable, because they could reach it by an outside stone staircase. We do not know the name of the owner. But the house may have belonged to Mary, the mother of John Mark. Her house was a meeting place for the *disciples after the *resurrection (Acts 12:12).

Verse 16 The *disciples were going to prepare the *Passover meal. They would need a young sheep that they had cooked in an oven. The young sheep reminded them of the young sheep that the people killed in Egypt. Its blood on the door-posts of the *Jews' houses made the '*angel of death' pass over. Therefore their first-born sons remained alive (Exodus 12:3-8). Special leaves that tasted bitter were necessary. These leaves reminded them how bitter their life had been as slaves in Egypt. They also had a mixture of fruit and nuts called 'Charosheth'. This mixture was to remind them of the earth from which they had made bricks. Wine at different times in the meal was to remind them of the four promises that God had made (Exodus 6:6-7). 'I will bring you out. I will free you from being slaves. I will pay the price for you. I will take you for my people.'

The Last Supper 14:17-26

v17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the 12 *disciples. **v18** While they were eating at the table, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth. One of you who is eating with me will hand me over to my enemies.' **v19** The *disciples began to be sad. They said to Jesus, one after another, 'Is it I?' **v20** Jesus replied, 'It is one of the 12 *disciples. It is the man who puts his bread into the same dish with me.' **v21** The Son of Man will go exactly as *Scripture says about him. But how terrible it will be for that man who hands the Son of Man over to his enemies. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.'

v22 As they were eating, Jesus took bread and he gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and he said, 'Take it. This is my body.' **v23** And he took a cup of wine. When he had given thanks, he gave it to them. They all drank from it. **v24** Jesus said to them, 'This is my blood of the new agreement between God and people, which I will pour out for many.' **v25** I tell you the truth. I shall not drink the fruit of the *vine again until I drink it in God's *kingdom.'

v26 Then they sang a song to praise God. And they went out to the *Mount of *Olives.

Verse 18 To share a meal was a sign of friendship. To hand a friend over to his enemies is especially wicked. Jesus was probably thinking about the words of Psalm 41:9. 'Even my close friend has turned against me. He was the man that I trusted. He shared my food.'

Verse 19 The *disciples did not suspect Judas. Their question to Jesus meant, 'I am sure that you cannot mean me.' They did not expect Jesus to say which *disciple he meant.

Verses 20-21 The words 'one of the 12 *disciples' emphasise again that Judas should have been a loyal friend. There was a dish that contained a mixture of fruit and nuts. People usually put their bread into it in order to eat it.

Jesus' words were a last appeal to Judas to change his mind. Jesus was also warning him. The fate of the man who handed him over would be terrible. Jesus could have stopped Judas. If the other *disciples knew, they would have acted at once. They might even have killed Judas. But Jesus knew that his death on the *cross was in the plan of God. However, Judas was responsible for his actions. Nobody forced him to hand Jesus over to his enemies. Jesus knew what Judas planned. But that did not make Judas carry out his plan. To know that something will happen does not make it happen.

Verse 22 Jesus probably used the words of thanks that the head of a family would use before a meal. 'Thanks be to you, *Lord our God, King of the World, who brings food from the earth.' He broke the bread as a picture of the fact that he was going to give his life for them. He told them to 'take it'. They were free to accept what Jesus would do for them by his death. God would forgive them because Jesus died.

Verse 23 They all drank from the same cup of wine as a sign of their unity. There were four cups of wine at the *Passover meal. Jesus probably used the last one, at the end of the meal. Paul says that Jesus took the cup 'after supper' (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Verse 24 Jesus said that the wine was the sign of his blood. He also said that he would pour it out. The old agreement was between God and the *Jewish nation. The *Jewish people had to obey God's laws (Exodus 24:3-8). But the *Jewish people had spoiled that agreement with God. Jeremiah spoke about a new agreement (31:31-34). Men would want to obey God because of his love for them. The blood of an animal 'signed' the old agreement. When Jesus gave his life for men, he would have 'signed' the new agreement. It was 'for many'. The old agreement had been between God and the *Jews. The new agreement was for everyone.

Verse 25 In the *Passover ceremony, *Jews gave thanks that God created 'the fruit of the *vine'. Jesus used the picture language of the *Messiah's splendid dinner. He would drink wine again when he shared in the joy of the new age of the *kingdom. So, his final words were words of hope. He knew that death was not the end.

Verse 26 The song was one of the Psalms that the *Jews used at *feasts. It may have been Psalm 118. They 'went out' from the safety of the upper room to the trouble in the world outside. Christians go out from their *worship to the world. In the world, they suffer troubles and *temptations.

Jesus warns Peter 14:27-31

v27 Jesus said to his *disciples, 'You will all turn away from me, because it is in *scripture, "I will strike the man who looks after the sheep. So then the sheep will scatter." **v28** But after God has raised me up, I will go before you to Galilee.' **v29** Peter said to him, 'Even if they all turn away from you, I will not.' **v30** Jesus said to him, 'I tell you the truth. This same night, you will say three times that you do not know me. You will say it before the male chicken calls twice.' **v31** But Peter made a very strong protest. 'I will not say that, even if I must die with you.' And all the *disciples said the same.

Verse 27 The *Greek word that we have translated 'turn away' here and in verse 29 is 'skandalizein'. It meant something that was like a trap to catch an animal. It would be easy for Jesus' *disciples to lose their *faith in him. It could happen as easily as an animal falls into a trap. He used words from Zechariah (13:7). Sheep soon scatter when there is nobody to look after them.

Verse 28 Jesus would rise again after he died. He was confident about that. He said that he would 'go before' them to Galilee. In that country, a man who looked after sheep always went ahead of his sheep. Mark does not record that Jesus appeared to his *disciples in Galilee. But Matthew tells us that Jesus met them there (Matthew 28:10, 16). Jesus might also mean that in Galilee he would gather his scattered sheep together. He would still think of the *disciples as his 'sheep', even after they had disappointed him.

Verse 29 Peter felt confident that he would never leave Jesus. He did not realise that he would be in a situation of great danger. He believed that he was strong, like a rock. But he would be weak. It was easy to say that he would die with Jesus. But when the test came, he was afraid.

Verse 30 The male chicken, or 'cock', is a bird that calls very early in the morning. But this 'cock' might refer to the *Roman soldiers' *trumpet. It sounded at the end of the third period while they were on guard during the night. That would be early morning, about 3 o'clock. Before the night was over, Peter would have failed to *keep his promise.

Verse 31 All the *disciples said the same as Peter. Perhaps Mark records Peter's promise and failure in order to encourage Christians in Rome. He was writing when Peter was an important leader in the church. God and Christ had forgiven Peter and later, he *preached the *gospel with great courage. Other Christians might do wrong things. But they could know that God would forgive them too.

Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane 14:32-42

v32 Jesus and his *disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to his *disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' **v33** He took with him Peter, James and John. He began to be afraid and in great mental pain. **v34** He said to them, 'I am very sad. I feel as if I could die. Stay here, and watch.' **v35** He went a little way on. He fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. **v36** He said, '*Abba, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. But let what you want happen; not what I want.' **v37** He returned to the *disciples and he found them asleep. He said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Surely you could watch for one hour. **v38** Watch and pray. Then you will not fall into *sin when you are *tempted. The *spirit is willing, but the body is weak.' **v39** Jesus went away again and he prayed with the same words. **v40** Then he came back and he found them asleep. They could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to Jesus. **v41** Jesus came back the third time. He said, 'Go on sleeping now and rest! It is enough. The hour has come. They are about to hand over the Son of Man to wicked people. **v42** Get up! Let us go now. Look! The man who is handing me over to my enemies has come.'

Verse 32 Gethsemane was a place where there were many *olive trees. The name means that there was equipment with which to squeeze the oil from the *olives. John said that Jesus often went there with his *disciples (John 18:2).

Verses 33-34 Jesus took his three closest friends with him. He was thinking about what would happen. He was completely human as he thought about it. He was still a fairly young man. He had seen people die on *crosses. And he knew how terribly they suffered. But he was willing to die in this painful way in order to obey his Father. He asked his friends to keep watching. He wanted them to stay awake.

Verse 35 'The hour' meant the time of his death.

Verse 36 He said that 'everything was possible'. He had *faith in the power of God. He used the *Aramaic word '*Abba'. Children used (and still use) this word to speak to their father. It describes a close *relationship between father and son. Christians can also call God '*Abba, my Father', because they have become God's children by means of *faith in Jesus (Romans 8:15).

'This cup' means 'this pain and trouble'. See the note on 10:38-39. Probably the devil was *tempting Jesus to avoid pain and death. But he wanted to obey his Father.

Verses 37-38 Jesus spoke especially to Peter. He called him 'Simon' because he was not showing his character as Peter the Rock. Jesus said that they were willing to help him. But they had not been able to control their bodies. They were tired, and they did not understand Jesus' great struggle against evil *spiritual powers.

Verses 39-41 Jesus was disappointed three times that his friends had not prayed with him and for him. Peter later denied three times that he knew Jesus. Perhaps he remembered then how he had failed to pray for strength three times.

'It is enough'. The time for sleep had ended. Jesus was ready for those who would arrest him.

Verse 42 Jesus knew that Judas was near. And he knew that Judas was going to hand him over to his enemies.

The arrest 14:43-52

v43 Immediately, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the 12 *disciples, arrived. He had with him a crowd of people who were holding swords and heavy sticks. The chief priests, the *scribes and the other leaders had sent them. **v44** The man who was handing Jesus over to his enemies had given them a sign. He said, 'The man whom I kiss is the man. Arrest him and take him away. And guard him well.' **v45** When he arrived, immediately Judas went near to Jesus. He said, 'Teacher', and kissed him. **v46** Then they seized Jesus and they held him. **v47** One of the men who were standing near drew his sword. He struck the *chief priest's servant, and he cut off the servant's ear.

v48 Then Jesus said to them, 'You have come out with swords and heavy sticks to seize me as if I were a thief. **v49** I have been with you in the *Temple day after day. I was teaching there and you did not seize me. But let the *scriptures come true.' **v50** And the *disciples all left him and they ran away.

v51 A certain young man was following Jesus. He was wearing only a sheet. They seized him. **v52** But he left the sheet, and he ran away naked.

Verse 43 It was terrible for Judas to hand Jesus over to his enemies. 'One of the 12 *disciples' again emphasises that. The *Sanhedrin sent soldiers with tools to fight with. It seems that they expected Jesus to oppose arrest. And perhaps they expected his *disciples to defend him. They thought that Jesus was trying to establish a political *kingdom. They thought that Jesus would try to gain that *kingdom by force.

Verses 44-45 It might have been difficult to identify Jesus in the dark among the trees. So, Judas had arranged to kiss Jesus, so that they would know the right person to arrest. He spoke to him as 'Teacher'. People usually kissed a teacher. That showed that they respected him. But Judas did not give Jesus that sort of kiss. It was a kiss that normally showed great love.

Verse 47 It was Peter who attacked the servant. John tells us that. John also tells us that the servant's name was Malchus (John 18:10). The *chief priest was Caiaphas (John 18:13). Luke tells us that Jesus cured the servant's ear (Luke 22:51).

Verses 48-49 Jesus said that there had been plenty of opportunity to arrest him in the *Temple. They were trying to arrest him in secret, as if he were a thief. Jesus had once accused them of behaving like thieves (Mark 11:17). The *scriptures were coming true. Mark does not say which *scriptures of the *Old Testament they were. Jesus knew that his arrest was in the plan of God. He also said that the *disciples would leave him.

Verse 50 His words came true as they rushed away.

Verses 51-52 A young man avoided arrest and he ran away naked. The incident is only in Mark's *Gospel. It is probable that Mark himself was the young man. His home in Jerusalem became a meeting place for *disciples (Acts 12:12). It is possible that the Last Supper was in his house. He had followed Jesus and the *disciples to the garden because he was curious. Judas did not return to the house before he led the crowd to Gethsemane. Otherwise, Mark might have tried to warn Jesus. But Mark had arrived too late.

Jesus in front of the *Sanhedrin 14:53-65

v53 They took Jesus away to the *chief priest. All the chief priests, *scribes and other leaders had gathered there with him. **v54** Peter followed from a distance and he went into the place in front of the *chief priest's house. He sat down there with the guards. He was keeping himself warm at the fire. **v55** The chief priests and all of the *religious leaders were trying to find some evidence against Jesus. They wanted to be able to kill him. But they could not find any suitable evidence. **v56** Many witnesses told lies about Jesus. But their stories did not agree with each other.

v57 Then some men stood up and they told this lie against Jesus. **v58** 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this *Temple that people have made with their hands. After three days, I will build another one, but I will not make it with hands." ' **v59** But even they could not make their stories agree. **v60** So the *chief priest himself stood up in front of them all. He asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer to the evidence that these men bring against you?' **v61** But Jesus remained silent and he gave no answer. Again the *chief priest asked him, 'Are you the *Messiah, the Son of the *Blessed Person?' **v62** Jesus said, 'I am. And you will all see the Son of Man. He will be sitting on the right hand side of power. And you will see him when he comes in the clouds of the sky.' **v63** Then the *chief priest tore his clothes and he said, 'We do not need any more witnesses. **v64** You heard his evil words against God. What is your decision now?' They all said that Jesus was guilty. He deserved to die. **v65** Some of them began to send water very quickly out of their mouths over Jesus. They put something over his eyes so that he could not see. Then they hit him and they said, '*Prophecy! Who hit you?' And the guards took him and they slapped his face.

Verse 53 There were 71 members of the *Sanhedrin. It was the chief *Jewish court with the power to deal with *religious matters. The Court broke many of the rules for giving a judgement. They were meeting in the *chief priest's house. They should have met in a special hall in the *Temple area.

Verse 54 Peter had the courage to follow. He wanted to see what would happen to Jesus.

Verses 55-56 No one witness could prove that a man was guilty. Two or three witnesses had to agree with each other in every detail (Deuteronomy 17:6).

Verses 57-58 Some men then accused Jesus of saying that he would destroy the *Temple. Jesus had warned that people would destroy the *Temple (Mark 13:2). Perhaps they knew about that. They had changed words that John recorded: 'If you destroy this *Temple ---' (John 2:19-22). John realised that Jesus was speaking about his body. They might destroy the '*temple' of his body, but he would rise again.

Verse 61 Jesus did not answer. He knew that any reply would be of no use. The leaders had already decided to kill him. He was like the servant in Isaiah's poem, 'He was like a sheep. A sheep is dumb with those who are cutting its wool. So he did not open his mouth' (Isaiah 53:7).

The *chief priest's question was not legal. He should not have asked Jesus to answer a question like that. The priest was very careful not to use the name of God. He said 'the *Blessed Person'. But he was not obeying the rules of a fair court.

Verse 62 'I am' was the name of God (Exodus 3:14). Jesus agreed that he was the *Messiah. He used words from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13. They would see his honour when he came with great light. Jesus was confident that he would win in the end.

Verse 63 The *chief priest said that Jesus had insulted God. He tore his special clothes as a sign of anger. He was showing that he did not agree with such 'evil words against God'.

Verse 64 Because there was a death sentence, there should have been a night between the court's decision and the punishment. Then there would be time for the members of the *Sanhedrin to change their minds about the sentence. But the *Romans killed Jesus on the same day, because the *Jews made false charges against him.

Verse 65 The guards insulted Jesus and they made fun of him as a false *prophet. They prevented him from seeing. Then they asked him to say who had hit him.

Peter denies Jesus 14:66-72

v66 Peter was below in the court yard. One of the *chief priest's women servants came by. **v67** She saw Peter as he was warming himself. She looked carefully at him and she said, 'You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.' **v68** But Peter denied it. He said, 'I do not know him. Neither do I understand what you are talking about.' He went out to the entrance to the court yard. **v69** The woman servant saw Peter there. She said again to the people who were standing about, 'This man is one of them.' **v70** Again he said that he was not. After a little while, those who were standing near said to Peter, 'You are certainly one of them. You are from Galilee.' **v71** Peter began to ask God to punish him if he was not speaking the truth. He used a most serious promise and he said, 'I do not know this man that you are talking about!' **v72** Immediately, the male chicken called for the second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him, 'This same night, you will say three times that you do not know me. You will say it before the male chicken calls twice.' And when he thought about it, he wept.

Verses 66-68 The servant saw Peter as he sat by the fire. She was sure that she recognised him as a friend of Jesus. Some copies of Mark's book add the words, 'Just then the male chicken called' after Peter denied Jesus for the first time. Peter moved away from the light of the fire so that he was not so noticeable.

Verses 69-70 The servant told other people that Peter was 'one of them'. Then someone insisted that Peter certainly was a *disciple. He had a different accent, because he came from Galilee. His way of speaking showed that he followed Jesus. Jesus came from Galilee.

Verse 71 Peter was very frightened. He said that he did not know Jesus. He said it in the strongest way that he could. He asked God to punish him if he was not telling the truth. He said that he did not know 'this man'.

Verse 72 The sound of the male chicken or of the *Roman *trumpet for the second time reminded Peter about Jesus' words. He was so ashamed that he burst into tears. He had said that he would never stop being loyal to Jesus. He had failed. He wept because he was so sad. He was sad about his lack of courage to be loyal to Jesus as his Master.

Chapter 15

The *trial in front of Pilate 15:1-15

v1 As soon as morning came, the chief priests met with the other leaders and the *scribes and the whole *Sanhedrin. They made a decision. They tied Jesus up and they led him away. They handed him over to Pilate. **v2** Pilate asked him, 'Are you the king of the *Jews?' Jesus answered him, 'It is as you say.' **v3** The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. **v4** Pilate asked Jesus again, 'Are you not going to answer? See how many things they accuse you of.' **v5** But Jesus still did not reply. So Pilate was astonished. **v6** At the *feast he used to let one prisoner go free. The people could ask for the one that they wanted. **v7** Now there was a man in prison called Barabbas. He was there among people who had fought against the *Romans. These people had murdered while they fought. **v8** The crowd came. And they asked Pilate to do what he usually did. **v9** Pilate replied, 'Do you want me to set the king of the *Jews free for you?' **v10** He knew why the chief priests had handed Jesus over. It was because they were jealous. **v11** But the chief priests persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas instead. **v12** Then Pilate said to them, 'What shall I do with the man whom you call the king of the *Jews?' **v13** The crowd shouted, 'Fix him to a *cross!' **v14** Pilate said to them, 'Why, what wrong things has he done?' But they shouted even louder, 'Fix him to a *cross!' **v15** Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd. So he let Barabbas go free for them. He ordered his soldiers to strike Jesus many times with terrible whips. Then he handed him over to the soldiers to fix him to a *cross.

Verse 1 The *Sanhedrin had complete authority over *religious matters. But the *Romans did not allow them to kill anyone. The *Roman who governed Judea was Pontius Pilate. He ruled during the years 26-36 *AD. He ruled from the town called Caesarea. He had come from Caesarea to Jerusalem with his soldiers for the *Passover *feast. The *Jewish crowds at *Passover remembered how Moses had led their *ancestors to freedom from Egypt. The crowds might become so excited that they might cause trouble. They might begin to fight in order to gain freedom from *Roman rule.

The *Sanhedrin could not say that Jesus spoke evil words against God. They knew that Pilate would not listen to that. They had to decide how to accuse Jesus of a political crime. They said, 'Jesus caused people to oppose the *Romans. He said that they should not pay their taxes to the *Romans. He said that he was the *Jewish *Messiah, a king' (Luke 23:1-2).

Pilate realised that the *Jewish leaders hated Jesus. Otherwise, they would not accuse him to a *Roman.

Verse 2 Pilate asked Jesus if he was king of the *Jews. He was King, but not in a way that Pilate would understand the word 'king'. He was a king of love, not a king of a political *kingdom.

Verses 3-5 The chief priests continued to accuse Jesus. Pilate was astonished that Jesus did not say anything in reply. But any answer that he gave would be no use. Jesus knew that.

Verse 6 In an effort to gain support from the *Jews, Pilate allowed one prisoner to go free at *Passover time.

Verse 7 There were some men in prison after a recent attack on the *Romans. Among them was Barabbas. He had murdered during the attack, but he may have been a hero among the *Jews.

Verses 8-9 Pilate knew that Jesus had not done anything wrong. So, he asked if he should set free Jesus, 'the king of the *Jews'.

Verse 11 The crowd would include people who supported Barabbas. There were probably other people whom the priests had paid to shout against Jesus. People in a crowd often do things that they would never do on their own.

Verse 12 Pilate asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus. That was not a wise question. He should have made the decision himself, and set Jesus free. But perhaps he expected the crowd to support Jesus.

Verses 13-14 The crowd demanded that Pilate should kill Jesus on a *cross. He protested that Jesus was not guilty. But they insisted, 'Fix him to a *cross.'

Verse 15 Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd, because he was afraid. He was afraid that he would be in trouble. He was already in trouble with the *Jews for several reasons.

1. When he became ruler, he ordered the *Roman army flags to go into Jerusalem. He had to remove them after the *Jews complained.

2. He had used *Temple money to improve the water supply to Jerusalem.

3. People blamed Pilate for the death of *Jews from Galilee while they were in the *Temple (Luke 13:1-4). The *Jews said that Pilate would not be loyal to Caesar if he set Jesus free (John 19:12). They were suggesting that they could make him lose his job. So, Pilate set free a criminal and he ordered the death of an innocent man.

'Barabbas' means 'son of a father'. The name might mean that he was like his father in character. Jesus was 'the Son of the Father'. He showed what God is like. Barabbas showed hate. Jesus showed love.

The *Romans tied sharp pieces of bone and metal to a leather whip. Then they hit a man's bare back with it. It was such a cruel punishment that men sometimes died after it. Or they became mad.

They kill Jesus on a *cross 15:16-41

Death on a *cross was only for slaves, or for people who were not *Roman citizens. Jesus would have seen young men die on *crosses near Nazareth when he was a boy.

The soldiers make fun of Jesus 15:16-20

v16 The soldiers took Jesus away into the ruler's palace. They called together the whole band of soldiers. **v17** Then they put a purple coat on him. They made a crown of *thorns to put on his head. **v18** They began to greet him, 'Welcome, king of the *Jews.' **v19** They were striking him on the head with a stick. They were *spitting on him. They went on their knees as if they were showing him honour. **v20** When they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple coat. They put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out in order to kill him on a *cross.

Verse 16 Pilate's soldiers lived in the ruler's palace with him.

Verse 17 The *Jews had accused Jesus of saying that he was a king. The soldiers knew that. So, they had their fun. They pretended to give him honour as a king. A soldier's old red coat would look like the purple coat that the great ruler in Rome wore. They had made the crown out of small very sharp branches from a tree and it would hurt his head. However, it is possible that they put the crown on his head with the points away from his head. Then they were imitating the crown with beams of light like the sun. The rulers in Jesus' time had their pictures with crowns like that on coins.

Verse 18 The words, 'Welcome, king of the *Jews', were like the greeting that people gave to the great ruler in Rome, 'Welcome, Caesar'. The soldiers knew that the *Jews did not have a king. So they were insulting both Jesus and the *Jews.

Verse 19 Matthew tells us that they put a stick in Jesus' hand. It looked like the special stick that showed a king's authority. The king would carry it in ceremonies (Matthew 27:29). Then they hit him with it and they *spat at him. They pretended to give him honour. They went down onto their knees, as men did in front of important people.

Verse 20 The soldiers had made fun of Jesus as a joke. They did not know that they were telling the truth. Jesus was a king. He is still a king.

The soldiers fix Jesus to his *cross 15:21-28

v21 Simon from Cyrene was passing by. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was coming in from the country. The soldiers forced him to carry the *cross. **v22** They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha. The word 'Golgotha' means 'The place of the *Skull'. **v23** They offered Jesus wine that they had mixed with *myrrh. But he did not take it. **v24** They fixed Jesus to the *cross. Then they shared out his clothes. They played a game of chance. In that way they decided what each soldier should get. **v25** It was nine o'clock in the morning when they fixed him to his *cross. **v26** They fixed a notice above him. It showed the crime of which the rulers accused him. The notice said, 'King of the *Jews'. **v27** They killed two thieves on *crosses at the same time as Jesus. One thief was on a *cross at his right side. And the other one was on a *cross at his left side. [**v28** The *scripture came true that said, 'They counted him among *sinners.']

Verse 21 Jesus was on his way to die on a *cross. So he should have carried the short beam part of the cross himself. The soldiers may have thought that Jesus could not walk with it. Jesus may have been weak because they had whipped him. Simon was from Cyrene in North Africa. He may have been a worker out in the country. His sons Alexander and Rufus may have been well-known Christians in Rome. Paul mentions a Rufus in Romans 16:13. Simon's experience when he carried the *cross may have caused him to become a *disciple. It is even possible that he is the same person as 'Black Simon'. 'Black Simon' was a leader in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1).

Verse 22 'Golgotha' was called 'the *Skull', perhaps because they killed people on *crosses there. It may have been a hill with the shape of a *skull.

Verse 23 Jesus was going to die on a *cross. A mixture of wine and *myrrh was a drug that some women from Jerusalem offered to such a person. It would help to make the pain a little less terrible. Jesus refused it. He wanted to be aware of what was happening.

Verse 24 The soldiers had to stay there because friends might have tried to rescue the men on *crosses. The *Romans allowed their soldiers to keep a prisoner's clothing. Each soldier had one piece of Jesus' clothing. They had to choose who would have the outer coat. They played a game of chance in order to do that (John 19:23-24). Mark's readers would remember the words in Psalm 22:18. 'They divided my clothes among them. They played a game for my clothing.'

Verse 26 The notice 'the King of the *Jews' was there to show a 'crime'. But it was showing the truth about Jesus. The priests complained to Pilate, but he refused to change it (John 19:21-22).

Verse 27 All his life, Jesus had been the friend of *sinners. On the *cross, he was still with *sinners. The thieves were in the places that James and John had asked for (10:37).

[Verse 28] is in some copies of Mark's book. The words are from Isaiah 53:12.

Many people make fun of Jesus 15:29-32

v29 The people who passed by shouted insults at Jesus. They shook their heads and they said, 'Ah! So you would destroy the *Temple and build it again in three days! **v30** Save yourself and come down from the *cross!' **v31** In the same way, the chief priests and *scribes made fun of him among themselves. They said, 'He saved other people. He cannot save himself. **v32** Let the Christ, the king of Israel (the *Jewish people), come down now from the *cross. When we see that, we will believe.' Those who were hanging on the crosses next to Jesus also made fun of him.

Verse 29 Jesus suffered *physical pain on the *cross. But he also suffered the cruel laughter of people who were passing by. The priests and even the thieves next to him laughed at him too.

Jesus' enemies said that he had insulted God. Now people insulted Jesus. They also said, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this *Temple that people have made with their hands. After three days, I will build another one" ' (14:58). If he had the power to do that, then he would have the power to come down from the *cross.

Verses 31-32 The priests said that Jesus had saved other people. They spoke the truth when they said that. Jesus had rescued people from diseases and evil *spirits (1:34). He had saved a man by forgiving him (2:5-10). The priests demanded a sign, as the *Pharisees had (8:11). He should prove that he was the *Messiah by a *miracle. They would believe that he was the *Messiah then. Jesus could have saved himself but he would not. By his suffering, he was showing God's love for everyone. Also, he was making it possible for God to forgive us. People believe in him now because he did **not** come down from the *cross. The thieves were in the same situation as Jesus. They realised that he was different from them. And so they laughed at him.

The death of Jesus 15:33-41

v33 At noon, there was darkness over the whole country. It lasted until three o'clock. **v34** At three o'clock, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' This means, 'My God, my God, why have you left me alone?' **v35** Some people were standing near. And they heard what Jesus said. They said, 'Look, he is calling for Elijah!' **v36** Someone ran and filled a *sponge with sour wine. He put it on a stick. And he gave it to Jesus to drink. He said, 'Wait! Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' **v37** Jesus gave a loud cry and he took his last breath. **v38** The *Temple curtain tore in two, from top to bottom. **v39** The *Roman officer was standing in front of Jesus. He heard Jesus' cry. And he saw how he died. He said, 'This man really was the Son of God.' **v40** There were some women there who were watching from a distance. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome were among them. **v41** In Galilee, they had followed Jesus and they had taken care of his needs. There were many other women there who had come up to Jerusalem with him.

Verse 33. God may have used a natural cause to make the darkness. It may have been a dust storm that God caused. It could not have been because the moon stopped the light from the sun at the time of the *Passover. *Passover is always when the whole of the moon is shining. But, in the *Old Testament, darkness is a sign of God's judgement (Amos 5:20; 8:9). Jesus had said, 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12). The darkness was a sign that God's punishment was coming on human *sin. And Jesus had linked himself with human *sin. 'For us, God caused him to be *sin who knew no *sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Verse 34 Jesus' words in *Aramaic came from Psalm 22:1. For the first time ever, Jesus felt that something separated him from God. God had left him because of our *sin. This was a terrible time. As a man, he knew the feeling of despair that people sometimes suffer. There is therefore no human feeling that Jesus does not understand. But Jesus was suffering so that God could forgive people. He was like the servant in Isaiah's poem who suffered on behalf of other people (Isaiah chapter 53). Jesus felt the darkness of being cut off from God. That is what *sin causes. Those who ask God to forgive them in Jesus' name will not stay in the darkness. They will live 'in the light' with him (1 John 1:7).

Jesus may have remembered the rest of Psalm 22. 'God has not hidden his face. He has heard when he cried out to him' (Psalm 22:24).

Verses 35-36 Someone thought that Jesus was asking Elijah to rescue him. There was a tradition that Elijah would come to the help of good people in trouble. The man who offered Jesus the drink of the soldiers' cheap wine was curious. He wanted to know whether Elijah would come.

Verse 37 The loud cry was probably the cry of 'It is finished' that John recorded (19:30). That meant that Jesus had completed God's work.

Verse 38 The curtain in the *Temple separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Only the priest could go into the Most Holy Place. He went in once every year in order to pray. He prayed that God would forgive him and all the *Jews. The curtain tore as a sign that people could now approach God themselves, because of Jesus. Jesus is the Chief Priest. The *sacrifice that he offered was himself. The death of Jesus was a *sacrifice that nobody needed to repeat every year. He opened the way to God by his death, which he offered once for all time (Hebrews 10:11-12).

Verse 39 The *Roman army officer had probably seen many men die. But he realised that the death of Jesus was different. He said that Jesus was 'the Son of God'. The officer was a *Gentile. His words were a sign that *Gentiles would be part of the Christian church. 'Son of God' were the words with which Mark began his *Gospel (1:1).

Verses 40-41 Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John were at the *cross (John 19:25). Mark writes about Mary Magdalene. She came from Magdala, on the west coast of Lake Galilee. Mary, who was the mother of James the younger and Joses, was there too. Salome was the mother of James and John. She was probably the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. They were all witnesses at the death of Jesus.

Joseph from Arimathea buries Jesus 15:42-47

v42 Evening came. It was the day of Preparation, the day before the *Sabbath. **v43** Joseph from Arimathea was a respected *Jewish leader. He was waiting for the *kingdom of God. He had the courage to go to Pilate and to ask for the body of Jesus. **v44** Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. He sent for the *Roman officer. And he asked him if Jesus had died. **v45** He heard from the officer that Jesus was dead. Then he allowed Joseph to have the body. **v46** Joseph bought some good cloth for the body. He took the body down from the *cross and he wrapped it in the good cloth. He laid Jesus in a cave that his men had dug out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the grave. **v47** Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, saw where Joseph had laid Jesus.

Verse 42 The day when *Jews prepared for the *Sabbath was Friday. The *Sabbath began at sunset on Friday, about six o'clock. Then it was against the *Jewish law to do physical work.

Verse 43 Joseph came from a town that was 20 miles north west of Jerusalem. He was a member of the *Sanhedrin. He had remained silent. Or he had no opportunity to change the decision to kill Jesus. The *Romans left bodies on crosses to warn other people. But God's rules meant that a man's body should not stay on a *cross after sunset (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). Joseph was being fairly brave. People would know now that he was a friend to Jesus. That might have been dangerous for Joseph. Joseph also risked the possibility that Pilate might refuse his request.

Verses 44-45 Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly. But the *Roman officer was able to support Joseph's request. Mark shows clearly that Jesus died. Some people want to deny the *resurrection. So they say that Jesus did not really die. But Pilate, the *Roman officer, Joseph and the women all knew that Jesus did suffer actual death.

Verse 46 Joseph had little time between Jesus' death at three o'clock and the beginning of the *Sabbath at six o'clock. John says that Nicodemus helped him (John 19:38-40). The grave was a large cave that men had dug out of the rock. It belonged to Joseph and it had never had a body in it before (Matthew 27:60). He used a heavy stone to roll across the entrance.

Verse 47 The women knew which cave Joseph had put Jesus in. They intended to return after the *Sabbath in order to *anoint Jesus' body.

Chapter 16

The *resurrection 16:1-8

v1 When the *Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Salome and Mary, the mother of James, went out. And they bought spices (substances that have a beautiful smell). They wanted to put them on Jesus' body. **v2** Very soon after dawn on Sunday morning, the first day of the week, they went to the grave. **v3** They were discussing who would roll the stone from the entrance. **v4** But they looked up. And they saw that someone had already rolled back the very large stone. **v5** So they went into the rock grave. There was a young man, who was sitting on the right side. He was wearing a long white coat. They were astonished. **v6** He said, 'Do not be so surprised. You are looking for Jesus from Nazareth, whom they killed on a *cross. He is not here. He has risen. Look at the place where they laid his body. **v7** Now go. And tell his *disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, as he told you.' **v8** The women ran away from the grave. They were trembling and astonished. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Verse 1 The women went out to buy special substances as soon as the *Sabbath ended at sunset on Saturday.

Verse 2 The first opportunity to see what they were doing was at dawn on Sunday morning.

Verses 3-4 They remembered that there was a heavy stone at the entrance to the rock grave. It would be too heavy for them to push back. But they arrived at the grave. Then, they discovered that there was no problem. Someone had already rolled the stone aside.

Verses 5-6 They were astonished to find a young man in white clothes who was sitting on the right side of the cave. He was an *angel. He told them that they were looking in the wrong place for Jesus. He had risen. They could see for themselves the empty place where his body had been.

Verse 7 They must tell his *disciples 'and Peter' that they would see him in Galilee. The special message for Peter was to show that Jesus still included him in his love. Peter had said that he did not know Jesus. 'And Peter' would have given him the first sign of hope after he had said that. Jesus had said that he would go to Galilee (14:28).

Verse 8 This verse is a rather sudden end to Mark's *Gospel. Mark might have written about how Jesus *kept his promise to meet his *disciples in Galilee. So later writers added other ends for the book. There is a short one, and a longer one. Mark may not have had time to complete his *Gospel. Perhaps he became ill. Perhaps he died, or the *Romans killed him. If he had finished it, perhaps the end of the *scroll wore out. Then perhaps it tore off. Or, perhaps his book had the same shape as a modern book, and the last page became separated. (The first Christians were among the first people to use such books.)

It is possible, however, that Mark intended to end at verse 8. All through his *Gospel, he had described how Jesus astonished people by his words and actions. Jesus' *disciples, too, had a feeling of fear. And they greatly respected Jesus for his power (4:41). The *resurrection was the most astonishing event of all. Mark perhaps thought that it was not important to write about Jesus' appearances to his *disciples. He had given the most important fact, 'He has risen.' The fear of the women was a suitable reaction to such an astonishing act of God. The reaction of all Christians should be similar. Verse 8 therefore can be a suitable end to Mark's *Gospel.

The short end

This was an effort by a writer to make Mark's *Gospel complete.

'The women went to Peter and those who were with him. They gave them a brief account of all that the *angel had told them. Afterwards Jesus himself sent them out from east to west. He sent them with the holy and always living message about how God will *save people. *Amen.'

'From east to west' means that the *disciples had a message for the whole world. Their message was that belief in Jesus would give people *eternal life. This message would never change.

The long end 16:9-20

This was an account that was not in the early copies of Mark's book. It is a list of Jesus' *resurrection appearances that Luke and Matthew record. The writer also refers to details from Matthew's *Gospel and from Acts. The author may have written it early in the second century *AD.

However, it is possible that Mark himself actually wrote these words at the end of his book. In those days, people had to copy books by hand. So, people would copy the complete book until the loss of its last page. Then people would have to copy the book without its last page.

The copies that have the long end are later copies than those without it. And the copies without the long end are good copies. But Mark wrote the original book over 200 years before the earliest copies that still exist. So, perhaps the people who wrote the copies with the long end had accurate copies of the end section.

v9 Jesus rose from death early on the first day of the week. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had driven out seven evil *spirits. **v10** She went. And she told those who had been with him. They were very sad and they were weeping. **v11** They heard that Jesus was alive. And that she had seen him. But they did not believe it. **v12** After that, Jesus appeared in a different way to two of them. They were walking into the country. **v13** They went back and they told the other *disciples. But they did not even believe them. **v14** Afterwards, Jesus appeared to the 11 *disciples themselves as they were eating. Jesus blamed them for their lack of *faith. They had refused to believe those who had seen him after his *resurrection. **v15** Jesus said to them, 'Go into the entire world. *Preach the good news to everyone. **v16** I will *save anyone who believes and receives *baptism. God will punish anyone who does not believe. **v17** These are the *miracles that believers will do. They will force out evil *spirits in my name. They will speak in new languages. **v18** They will pick up snakes. If they drink anything poisonous, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on those who are ill. And the people will be well again.' **v19** When the *Lord Jesus had finished talking to them, he went up into heaven. He sat down at the right hand side of God. **v20** Then the *disciples went out and they *preached everywhere. The *Lord worked with them. He showed that the message was true. He showed it by the *miracles that happened with it. *Amen.

The writer refers to three appearances of Jesus. In each one, he emphasises the *disciples' lack of *faith to believe that he was alive.

Verses 9-11 Luke mentions that Jesus had made Mary Magdalene free from 'seven evil *spirits' (Luke 8:2). John describes how Jesus appeared to her in the garden (John 20:11-18).

Verses 12-13 The two people on the road to Emmaus did not recognise Jesus at first. They only realised who he was at supper. This was when he blessed and broke the bread. They returned to Jerusalem at once in order to tell the other *disciples (Luke 24:13-34).

Verse 14 The third appearance may have been when Thomas was among the 11 *disciples. It was Thomas especially whom Jesus encouraged to have more *faith (John 20:26-29).

Verse 15 Matthew records Jesus' command to *preach the *gospel everywhere. They should *baptise people as a sign of their *faith.

Verses 17-18 The new powers that the *disciples will have include the power to send evil *spirits out of people. They also include the power to cure sick people. They had already been able to do this (Mark 6:13). Acts 2:4 describes how they spoke in other people's languages on the day of *Pentecost. Paul escaped without injury when he picked up a snake (Acts 28:5). The reference to snakes and poison means that God will protect his *disciples. He will protect them in dangerous situations that they cannot avoid.

Verse 19 Mark had not used the title 'the *Lord Jesus' in his *Gospel. But Jesus had now gone back to heaven to the place of honour with God. So *Lord is a suitable title to describe Jesus. Jesus had referred to Psalm 110:1, while he was teaching in the *Temple (Mark 12:36). It describes the great honour that God would give to the *Messiah. Luke describes how Jesus went back to heaven in Acts 1:11.

Verse 20 The author of verses 9-20 ends with an account of how the *disciples obeyed Jesus' command. The Acts of the *Apostles describes how they *preached the *gospel. It records how the *Lord worked *miracles by them. He was with them wherever they went.

Word List

Abba ~ *Aramaic word for father.

AD ~ AD 50 means the year that was 50 years after Jesus came, and so on.

adultery ~ when one person has sex with another person's wife or husband.

altar ~ the special table, where they burnt animals or other gifts that people offer to God.

Amen ~ we agree.

ancestors ~ people in the past from whom one's parents came.

angel ~ God's special *messenger.

anoint ~ to mark a person with oil; sometimes it showed that God had chosen that person.

apostle ~ one of the 12 special men that Jesus sent out.

Aramaic ~ the language that the *Jews spoke when Jesus was on earth.

Atonement ~ the special day when *Jews ask God to forgive them.

baptise/baptism ~ to put a person in water, or to put water on a person. It is to show that they want to follow Christ.

Baptist ~ a person who *baptises people (like John the Baptist).

BC ~ 50 BC means the year that was 50 years before Jesus came, and so on.

Beelzebub ~ a name for God's enemy, the devil.

blessed ~ happy or glad. We call people blessed if they have received good things. But when we call God blessed, it is a way to praise him.

burial ~ when people put a dead body in a grave.

carpenter ~ a worker in wood or large trees, for houses, boats and buildings.

chief priest ~ the most important priest in the *Temple. The chief priest is often called the high priest.

Christ ~ the *Jews' word for the king that God would send to rescue them.

commandments ~ God's rules.

cross ~ two pieces of wood that someone has fixed together in the shape of a cross. People put Jesus on a cross in order to kill him.

curse ~ to say that you want evil things to happen to something or someone.

disciples ~ people who follow someone in order to learn from him.

dog ~ an animal that some people have in their houses.

donkey ~ an animal that carries people or goods.

earthquake ~ when the surface of the earth shakes. If it is very strong, buildings can fall down.

eternal ~ with no beginning or end.

faith ~ belief in someone or something, or things that Christians believe about Jesus.

feast ~ a special meal; a *religious ceremony.

fig ~ a small soft fruit full of tiny seeds. People eat it fresh or dried.

Gehenna ~ a place where they burned rubbish. Also see the note on chapter 9 verses 43-48.

Gentiles ~ people who are not *Jews.

gospel ~ good news that God *saves people from *sin by Jesus Christ.

Gospel ~ one of the first four books in the *New Testament.

grape ~ a small, sweet fruit that people make wine from.

Greek ~ the language in which the authors wrote the *New Testament.

Hebrew ~ the language of *Jewish people.

Herodians ~ a political group, who were friends of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee.

Holy Spirit ~ God's Spirit. We cannot see him but he is there.

Hosanna ~ a word to praise God.

Jew ~ a person who is from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a person who believes what Jews believe.

Jewish ~ a word that describes a *Jew or anything about *Jews.

keep a promise ~ do what you have promised to do.

kingdom ~ people or place that a king rules; or people that God rules.

legion ~ a section of the *Roman army, about 6000 soldiers.

Lord ~ master; a name that we call God or Jesus; we call God or Jesus Lord when we obey them.

messenger ~ a person who gives a message.

Messiah ~ the *Jews' word for the king who would come and rescue them.

miracle ~ a wonderful work that someone does by God's power.

mount ~ a short word for mountain; small mountain.

myrrh ~ an oil with a bitter smell.

New Testament ~ the last part of the Bible, which the writers wrote after the life of Jesus. It is about Jesus' works and the things that he taught and about the first Christians.

obedience ~ we show obedience when we obey someone.

Old Testament ~ the first part of the Bible, which the writers wrote before the life of Jesus.

olive ~ a tree with small fruits (or the fruits themselves) that people use to make oil. They burned the oil to give them light. They used it in other ways too.

parable ~ a story with a hidden meaning.

Passover ~ the important day when *Jews remember that God freed them. He freed them from being slaves in Egypt at the time of Moses.

Pentecost ~ the time each year when *Jews thank God for their food; also the time when God gave the *Holy Spirit to the church.

perfume ~ something that smells nice to put on the skin.

Pharisees ~ a group of *Jews who thought that they obeyed all God's commands. Many Pharisees did not like the things that Jesus taught. These men thought that they were not doing any wrong things. So, they became very proud.

physical ~ about the body.

preach ~ to tell and explain the good news about Jesus to someone or to a group of people.

pregnant ~ when a woman is carrying a child inside her body during the time before birth.

prophecy ~ words that God gave to a person to speak or to write down.

prophecy ~ to tell about things that will happen in the future; to speak with the help of God (or of a false god); to speak on behalf of God (or of a false god).

prophet ~ a person who told people what God wanted.

relationship ~ people have a relationship when they are relatives or good friends; or when they live together.

religious ~ something that people do as part of the *worship of God.

repent ~ to change; to stop doing wrong things and to start to obey God.

resurrection ~ when a dead person becomes alive again.

Roman ~ Rome was the capital city of the rulers at that time. That which belonged to Rome was Roman.

Sabbath ~ seventh day of the week, a day of rest for *Jews.

sacrifice ~ a gift to God to ask him to forgive *sins; or to thank him for something. A gift to God, often an animal or bird, by the *Jews to ask God to forgive their *sins. Jesus gave himself to die as a sacrifice for our *sins.

Sadducees ~ a group of *Jews. They did not believe that a person continued to live on after death. They only used the first 5 books of the *Old Testament.

Sanhedrin ~ the group of *Jewish priests and other leaders.

Satan ~ the chief evil *spirit.

save ~ rescue from the results of *sin.

scribes ~ writers, especially the *Jewish lawyers.

scriptures ~ the books in the *Old Testament or in the Bible.

scroll ~ a long piece of paper or animal's skin; people fixed it round two pieces of wood; it usually had writing on it.

sin ~ when people do not obey God's commands.

sinner ~ someone who does not obey God's commands. But some *Jews used the word for anyone who did not obey all their extra rules.

skull ~ the bone of the head.

soul ~ the part of a person that we cannot see. It lives on after we die.

spirit ~ the part of a person who is alive that we cannot see. There are good spirits, like God's Spirit and his *angels. And there are bad spirits, like *Satan and his *angels.

spiritual, spiritually ~ about the part of us that never dies.

spit, spat ~ send liquid out of the mouth very quickly.

sponge ~ soft material that holds liquid.

Temple ~ the special building in Jerusalem where the *Jews *worshipped God.

tempt ~ to try to make someone do wrong things.

temptation ~ something that tries to make us do wrong things.

tenants ~ people who live somewhere and pay rent.

thorn ~ sharp, hard point on a plant or bush.

thunder ~ the loud noise that you may hear in a storm.

trial ~ a legal examination by which a judge decides if a person is guilty of a crime; the examination of a person in a court of law to discover whether he is guilty or not of a crime.

tribe ~ family from one man. The nation called Israel grew from the 12 sons of Jacob. These 12 families formed the 12 tribes of Israel.

trumpet ~ musical instrument; you blow into a tube.

unclean ~ dirty or not holy.

unleavened ~ without *yeast.

vine ~ a plant that climbs. Its fruits are called grapes. People make wine from grapes.

vineyard ~ a place where people grow *grapes.

worship ~ show honour to God, usually with other people.

yeast ~ people put yeast into flour and water to make bread; it makes the bread bigger while they are baking it. It spreads through all the bread, so Jesus compared it with other things that spread.

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