

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

The Gospel of Mark – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on FreeConferenceCall.com

[Call: 978-990-5000 * PASSCODE: 94041#]

Overall Theme: “Jesus, Journey to and Around Jerusalem” (8:31 – 12:44)

Jesus Ministry Beyond Galilee (8:1–8:30)

- I. Four Thousand Are Fed (8:1 – 8:10)
- II. Peter’s Confession – Jesus is “The Christ” (8:27 – 8:33)

Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem (8:31–10:52)

A. The First Passion Prediction Unit (8:31 – 9:29)

- III. Jesus Teaching on Meaning of Discipleship (8:34 – 9:1)
- IV. The Transfiguration (Mark 9:2 – 9:13)
- V. Jesus Cures the Demon Possessed Boy (9:14 – 9:29)

B. The Second Passion Prediction Unit (9:30 – 10:31)

- VI. Jesus Foretells His Death (Mark 9:30 – 9:32)
- VII. 2nd Lesson on Discipleship (Mark 9:33 – 10:31)

C. The Third Passion Prediction Unit (10:32 – 10:45)

- VIII. 3rd Lesson on Discipleship (Mark 10:35 - 10:45)
- IX. Conclusion: The Faith of Blind Bartimaeus (10:46 – 10:52)
- X. Jesus Entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1 – 11:11)
- XI. Jesus Prophetic Signs of God’s Judgement (Mark 11:12 – 11:26)
- XII. Jesus Controversy with the Jewish Religious Leaders (Mark 11:27 – 12:44)

Biblical Lens: Mark's Gospel

Four Thousand are Fed (Matt. 15:32–38)

8 In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them, ² “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.” ⁴ Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?” ⁵ He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.”

⁶ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. ⁷ They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before *them*. ⁸ So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. ⁹ Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, ¹⁰ immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

Pharisees Seek a Sign (Matt. 15:39–16:4)

¹¹ Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. ¹² But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.” ¹³ And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.

Disciples Do Not Understand (Matt. 16:5–12)

¹⁴ Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “*It is* because we have no bread.” ¹⁷ But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes, do you not

see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." ²¹ So He said to them, "How *is it* you do not understand?"

A Blind Man is Healed

²² Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. ²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." ²⁵ Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

Peter's Confession of Christ (Matt. 16:13–23; Luke 9:18–22)

²⁷ Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" ²⁸ So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. ³¹ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Cost of Discipleship (Matt. 16:24–27; Luke 9:22–26)

³⁴ When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains

the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

The Transfiguration (Matt. 16:28–17:3; Luke 9:27–36)

⁹ And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” ² Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” — ⁶ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. ⁷ And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” ⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. ¹¹ And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹² Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”

Demon-Possessed Son is Delivered (Matt. 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–42)

¹⁴ And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. ¹⁵ Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to *Him*, greeted Him. ¹⁶ And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?” ¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said,

“Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

¹⁹ He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” ²⁰ Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³ Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

²⁵ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” ²⁶ Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹ So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Jesus Foretells His Death (Matt. 17:22, 23; Luke 9:43–45)

³⁰ Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. ³¹ For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.” ³² But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

Attitude of Servanthood (Matt. 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–50)

³³ Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the* greatest.

³⁵ And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”

³⁸ Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.” ³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side. ⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Warning About Hell (Matt. 18:6–9)

⁴² “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—⁴⁴ where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’* ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—⁴⁶ where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’* ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—⁴⁸ where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*

Tasteless Salt is Worthless

⁴⁹ “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

Marriage and Divorce (Matt. 19:1–9)

10 Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He

taught them again. ² The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?” testing Him.

³ And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*.” ⁵ And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘*made them male and female.*’ ⁷ ‘*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,* ⁸ *and the two shall become one flesh*’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” ¹⁰ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. ¹¹ So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Children and the Kingdom (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17)

¹³ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” ¹⁶ And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.

Rich Young Ruler (Matt. 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23)

¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘*Do not commit adultery,*’ ‘*Do not murder,*’ ‘*Do not steal,*’ ‘*Do not bear false witness,*’ ‘*Do not defraud,*’ ‘*Honor your father and your mother.*’” ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Difficulty of Riches (Matt. 19:23–26; Luke 18:24–27)

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Eternal Reward (Matt. 19:27–30; Luke 18:28–30)

²⁸ Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” ²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰ who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.”

Coming Crucifixion (Matt. 20:17–19; Luke 18:31–34)

³² Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ³³ “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; ³⁴ and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

“Whoever Desires to Become Great” (Matt. 20:20–28)

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They

said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.” So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared.”

⁴¹ And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.⁴² But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Blind Bartimaeus is Healed (Matt. 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43)

⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.”⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

The Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21:1–11; Luke 19:29–40)

11 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples;² and He said to them, “Go into the village

opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring *it*.³ And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."⁴ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it.⁵ But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?"⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it.⁸ And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road.⁹ Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! '*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*'"¹⁰ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

A Fig Tree is Cursed (Matt. 21:18, 19)

¹² Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry.¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard *it*.

The Temple is Cleansed (Matt. 21:12, 13; Luke 19:45, 46)

¹⁵ So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.¹⁶ And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.¹⁷ Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, '*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations*'? But you have made it a '*den of thieves*.'"¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.¹⁹ When evening had come, He went out of the city.

Power of Faith (Matt. 21:20–22)

²⁰ Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.” ²² So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. ²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.”

Necessity of Forgiveness

²⁵ “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Question of Authority (Matt. 21:23–27; Luke 20:1–8)

²⁷ Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. ²⁸ And they said to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?” ²⁹ But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: ³⁰ The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.” ³¹ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ³² But if we say, ‘From men’ ”—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. ³³ So they answered and said to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Parable of the Vineyard Owner (Matt. 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19)

12 Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around *it*, dug *a place* for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ² Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the

vinedressers. ³ And they took *him* and beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully treated. ⁵ And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶ Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸ So they took him and killed *him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

⁹ "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not even read this Scripture: '*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. ¹¹ This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?*'" ¹² And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

Question of Taxes (Matt. 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26)

¹³ Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in *His* words. ¹⁴ When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*." ¹⁶ So they brought *it*. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.

Question of the Resurrection (Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40)

¹⁸ Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and he died; nor did

he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. ²² So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”

²⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*’? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

Question of the Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:34–40)

²⁸ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” ²⁹ Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.* ³⁰ *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’* This *is* the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like *it, is* this: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” ³² So the scribe said to Him, “Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” But after that no one dared question Him.

Jesus Questions the Leaders (Matt. 22:41–45; Luke 20:41–44)

³⁵ Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How *is it* that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? ³⁶ For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: ‘*The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”*’ ³⁷ Therefore David himself calls Him ‘*Lord*’; how is He *then* his Son?” And the common people heard Him gladly.

Jesus Condemns the Leaders (Matt. 23:1–14; Luke 20:45–21:4)

³⁸ Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces, ³⁹ the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, ⁴⁰ who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.” ⁴¹ Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. ⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. ⁴³ So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

Commentary: Jesus Journey To and Around Jerusalem (CHAP. 8:1 – 12:44)

The fourth major section of Mark’s Gospel is set in the framework of His journey from Caesarea Philippi in the north, where Jesus was confessed as Messiah, to Jerusalem in the south, where He fulfilled His messianic mission (cf. 8:27; 9:30; 10:1, 17, 32; 11:1; also cf. 14:28; 16:7). Jesus explained the nature of His messianic vocation and its implications for those who wish to follow Him. There is a balanced tension between His veiledness in suffering and His future revelation in glory.

In Mark 8:1–30 Mark presented a series of events that parallels his sequence in 6:32–7:37. Despite the replay of events and teaching, the disciples were **still slow to “see and hear” who Jesus really is** (cf. 8:18). In both narrative cycles the feeding of a multitude played an important role (cf. 6:52; 8:14–21).

Mark 8:1–3. During Jesus’ ministry in the Decapolis region (cf. 7:31), **another large crowd gathered** (cf. 6:34), probably both Jews and Gentiles.

After listening to Jesus' teaching **three days**, they had **nothing to eat**. They were weakened by hunger so that **if Jesus would send them home hungry, they would collapse on the way** as **some** had **come a long distance**. Jesus had **compassion** on them in their physical need (cf. 6:34) and called the disciples' attention to it (contrast 6:35–36). He took the initiative to feed the multitude who chose to forgo food in order to be nourished by His words.

Mark 8:4–5. The disciples' question highlighted their slowness in comprehending the significance of Jesus' presence with them in a new crisis. It also showed their inadequacy to meet the need; yet they indirectly referred the matter back to Jesus (contrast 6:37). Jesus' question concerning the amount of **bread** available clearly indicated His intentions, and was an invitation for the **disciples** to use the resources they had—**seven** loaves. They also had “a few small fish” (cf. 8:7; Matt. 15:34).

Mark 8:6–7. The feeding of this crowd ¹ occurred much like the feeding of the 5,000 (cf. 6:39–42). The Greek participles translated **taken** and **given thanks** *eucharistēsas*; cf. 14:23), and the verb **broke** are in the aorist tense, expressing decisive acts, whereas the verb **gave** is in the imperfect, showing that Jesus “kept on giving” the bread **to His disciples** for distribution (cf. 6:41). **He did the same thing with** a few small fish.

Mark 8:8–9a. In abrupt fashion Mark stressed the sufficiency of the miracle (all **ate and were satisfied**), the abundance of the provision (**seven basketfuls of food**

¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 136–137). Victor Books.

remained), and the large size of the crowd (**about 4,000 men** besides women and children; cf. Matt. 15:38). The baskets (*spyridas*) on this occasion differed from those used in feeding the 5,000 (*kophinoi*, Mark 6:43; cf. 8:19–20). They were rope or mat baskets sometimes large enough to carry a man (cf. Acts 9:25). Thus the 7 basketfuls (perhaps a basket for each loaf used) of Mark 8:8 likely held more than the 12 basketfuls of 6:43.

Mark 8:9b–10. Dismissing the crowd, Jesus immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) entered a **boat with His disciples** and crossed the Sea of Galilee **to the region of Dalmanutha**, a town (also called Magadan; cf. Matt. 15:39) near Tiberias on the lake’s western side (cf. Mark 8:13, 22).

8. The Pharisees’ Demand for a Sign (8:11–13) (Matt. 16:1–4)

Mark 8:11. The religious authorities (cf. 3:22–30; 7:1–5) **came and began to question** (*syzētein*, “to dispute, debate”) Him. They wished **to test** (from *peirazō*; cf. 1:13; 10:2; 12:15) **Him**, to get Him to prove the source of His authority (cf. 3:22–30; 11:30; Deut. 13:2–5; 18:18–22). They were seeking (from *zēteō*; cf. Mark 11:18; 12:12; 14:1, 11, 55) from Him **a sign from heaven**, one with divine authorization. In the Old Testament a “sign” was not so much a demonstration of power as an evidence that an utterance or action was authentic and trustworthy (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. “*sēmeion*,” 7:210–6, 234–6). The Pharisees did not demand a spectacular miracle, but that Jesus give unmistakable proof that He and His mission were authorized by God. They believed quite the opposite (cf. 3:22).

Mark 8:12. Jesus **sighed deeply** (cf. 7:34) and asked a rhetorical question that reflected His distress at their obstinate unbelief. The words **this generation** denoted the nation of Israel represented by those religious leaders (cf. 8:38; 9:19; 13:30). They continually rejected God’s gracious dealings with them (cf. Deut. 32:5–20; Ps. 95:10). **Miraculous** is not in the Greek text. With a solemn introductory formula (**I tell you the truth**; cf. Mark 3:28) and a Hebrew idiom of strong denial (cf. Ps. 95:11; Heb. 3:11; 4:3, 5), Jesus rejected their demand: **No sign will be given to** “this generation.” Matthew cited the only exception, “the sign of Jonah” (Matt. 16:4), that is, Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Matt. 12:39–40).

In Mark, there is a distinction between a miracle (dynamis) and a sign (sēmeion). The former evidences God’s presence and power in Jesus. An appeal for a miracle can be a legitimate expression of one’s faith (e.g., Mark 5:23; 7:26, 32). But such an appeal is illegitimate if it arises out of unbelief, as was true of the Pharisees.

Mark 8:13. Jesus’ indignation was evident by His abrupt departure. He **crossed** the Sea of Galilee **to the** northeastern shore once more. This ended His public ministry in Galilee.

9. The Disciples’ Failure to Understand Jesus’ words and deeds (8:14–21) (Matt. 16:5–12)

Mark 8:14. Their hasty departure (v. 13) probably accounts for the disciples’ failure **to bring bread**. They had no food in the boat **except for one loaf**, a sufficient amount with Jesus on board (cf. 6:35–44).

Mark 8:15. With the encounter near Tiberias (vv. 11–13; the site of Herod’s palace) still fresh in His mind, **Jesus warned** (lit., “kept giving orders to”; cf. 7:36) **them to be** continually on guard against **the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod** Antipas. A small amount of yeast can affect a large amount of bread dough when they are mixed. Yeast was a common Jewish metaphor for an invisible, pervasive influence. It often, as here, connoted a corrupting influence. In this context the yeast referred to a gradual increase of unbelief. This lay behind the Pharisees’ request for a sign even though their minds were already made up (cf. 8:11–12; 3:6). So it was with Herod (cf. 6:14–16; Luke 13:31–33; 23:8–9). As indicated by Jesus’ question (Mark 8:12), this attitude had affected the whole nation of Israel, and He warned His disciples against it. In contrast, He called them to faith and understanding without signs (cf. vv. 17–21).

Mark 8:16. The disciples totally ignored Jesus’ reference to the Pharisees and Herod. They heard “yeast” and assumed Jesus spoke of their **bread** shortage.

Mark 8:17–18. Jesus’ rebuke is expressed in five penetrating questions that showed their persistent lack of spiritual understanding (cf. 4:13, 40; 6:52). Since He was **aware of their discussion** (cf. 8:16), His rebuke was not because of their failure to grasp the meaning of His warning (v. 15), but at their failure to **understand** the meaning of His presence² with them. Their **hearts** were **hardened** (cf. 6:52). They had **eyes but failed to see and ears but failed to hear** (cf. Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2). In this

² Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 137–138). Victor Books.

sense, they were no better than those “outside” (cf. Mark 4:11–12). They also had short memories.

Mark 8:19–20. The questions about the two miraculous feedings (cf. 6:35–44; 8:1–9) indicated that the disciples had failed to comprehend the meaning of what they had seen, and to discern who Jesus really is.

Mark 8:21. The climactic question, **Do you still not understand?** was more of an appeal than a rebuke. The emphasis on “understanding” (vv. 17–18, 21) expressed the goal of Jesus’ words and works which had not yet been reached.

10. The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida (8:22–26)

This miracle and its structural parallel (7:31–37) are the only miracles recorded in Mark alone. It is the only recorded two-stage miracle which Jesus performed. Sight was a widely used metaphor for understanding. This miracle depicts the correct but incomplete understanding of the disciples.

Mark 8:22. When **Jesus** and the disciples arrived in **Bethsaida** Julius (cf. v. 13; 6:32), **some people brought a blind man and begged Him to touch him** with healing (cf. 5:23; 7:32).

Mark 8:23–24. Jesus **led** the man **outside the village**, probably to establish a one-to-one relationship with him (cf. 7:33) and to avoid publicity (8:26). In general Jesus’ miracles were public events (cf. 1:23–28, 32–34; 3:1–12; 6:53–56; 9:14–27; 10:46–52). But there are three exceptions in Mark (5:35–43; 7:31–37; 8:22–26). *The latter*

two may teach that a true understanding of Jesus comes through a personal relationship with Him apart from the crowd's opinions.

The touch of saliva and Jesus' **hands** (cf. 7:33) conveyed His intentions and stimulated the blind man's faith. At first the healing was only partial: **He looked up** (cf. 8:25) **and saw people** (lit., "the men," perhaps the Twelve) moving in a blur **like trees walking around**. Jesus' unusual question, **Do you see anything?** indicated that this was intentional on His part (not a weakness in the man's faith). It was a fitting follow-up to His rebuking the disciples (vv. 17–21). The man was no longer totally blind, but his sight was still poor. How like him were the disciples!

Mark 8:25. Then **Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes** again. He looked intently (from *diablepō*; v. 24 has a form of *anablepō*); **his sight was restored, and he** began to see (from *emblepō*) **everything clearly**. Now his sight was perfect. This was the outcome the disciples could anticipate despite difficulties in the process.

Mark 8:26. Apparently the man did not live in Bethsaida since **Jesus sent him home** with the admonition, **Don't go into the village** (i.e., "Don't go there first"). This is likely another instance of a command for silence in order to safeguard His planned activity (cf. 1:44–45; 5:43; 7:36).

D. Conclusion: Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:27–30)

(Matt. 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21)

At the center of his Gospel Mark placed Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah.

Up to this point the underlying question had been, **"Who is He?"** *After Peter's*

declaration on behalf of the Twelve, Mark's narrative is oriented toward the Cross and the Resurrection. From now on, the underlying double question was, *"What kind of Messiah is He,* and what does it mean to follow Him?" This ³ crucial passage is the point to which the first half of the book leads and from which the second half proceeds.

Mark 8:27. Jesus took His disciples about 25 miles north of Bethsaida (cf. v. 22) to the villages around Caesarea Philippi, a city located at the source of the Jordan River on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon. It was in the tetrarchy of Herod Philip, who gave it his own name to distinguish it from the Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. On the way (*en tē hodō*; cf. 1:2; 9:33–34; 10:17, 32, 52) Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about Him. Often Jesus' questions were springboards for new teaching (cf. 8:29; 9:33; 12:24–25).

Mark 8:28. Their response was the same as that given in 6:14–16: John the Baptist ... Elijah ... one of the prophets. *All three responses were wrong*, indicating that Jesus' identity and mission remained veiled from the people.

Mark 8:29. Then more directly and personally Jesus asked the disciples, Who do you say I am? The emphasis is on you, those He had chosen and trained. Peter, acting as the Twelve's spokesman (cf. 3:16; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29), declared openly, You are the Christ, the Messiah, God's Anointed One (cf. 1:1).

³ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 138–139). Victor Books.

Their open confession of Him at this point (cf. John 1:41, 51) was necessary because people in general were failing to discern His true identity, the religious leaders were strongly opposed to Him, and **He was about to give the disciples additional revelation about Himself** that would have costly implications for them. **It was essential that the question of His identity be firmly settled.** This affirmation of faith in Jesus was the anchor of their discipleship despite their temporary failures and defections (cf. Mark 14:50 ⁴ Mark 14:50, 66–72). Mark gave Peter’s confession in its simplest, most direct form (cf. Matt. 16:16–19) to focus on Jesus’ teaching on the nature of His messiahship (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:30–32; 10:32–34, 45).

Mark 8:30. Jesus sternly **warned** (lit., “ordered”; cf. 1:25; 3:12) **them not to tell anyone** He is the Messiah. *had thought up many false ideas about the concept of the “Messiah.”* The promised Davidic Messiah (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14–16; Isa. 55:3–5; Jer. 23:5) was commonly thought to be a political, nationalistic figure destined to free the Jews from Roman domination (cf. Mark 11:9–10). But Jesus’ messianic mission was broader in scope and far different in nature. So He was reluctant to use this title (cf. 12:35–37; 14:61–62), and the disciples were not yet ready to proclaim the true meaning of His messiahship.

Jesus knew He is God’s Anointed One (cf. 9:41; 14:62), so He accepted Peter’s declaration as correct. However, because of the disciple’s misunderstandings (cf. 8:32–33), He commanded silence (cf. 1:44) until He could explain that as Messiah it was necessary for Him to suffer and die in obedience to God’s will (cf. 8:31).

⁴ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 139). Victor Books.

VI. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (8:31–10:52)

The fourth major section of Mark's Gospel is set in the framework of His journey from Caesarea Philippi in the north, where Jesus was confessed as Messiah, to Jerusalem in the south, where He fulfilled His messianic mission (cf. 8:27; 9:30; 10:1, 17, 32; 11:1; also cf. 14:28; 16:7).

Jesus explained the nature of His messianic vocation and its implications for those who wish to follow Him. *There is a balanced tension between His veiledness in suffering and His future revelation in glory.* The structure of this section revolves around three Passion predictions: 8:31–9:29; 9:30–10:31; 10:32–52. Each unit includes a prediction (8:31; 9:30–31; 10:32–34); a reaction by the disciples (8:32–33; 9:32; 10:35–41); and one or more lessons in discipleship (8:34–9:29; 9:33–10:31; 10:42–52).

A. The First Passion Prediction Unit (8:31–9:29)

1. Jesus' First Prediction of His Death and Resurrection (8:31) (Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22)

Mark 8:31. After Peter declared that Jesus is the Messiah (v. 29), He ... began to teach them what this meant. This marked a turning point to new content in His teaching.

Contrary to popular messianic expectations, Jesus had not come to establish an earthly messianic kingdom *at that time*. Instead He declared **that the Son of Man must suffer many things** (cf. Isa. 53:4, 11), **be rejected by the Jewish authorities, be killed, and after three days** (“on the third day”; cf. Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22) **rise again** (Isa. 52:13; 53:10–12). This introduced to the disciples a new element in God's

kingdom program for which they were not prepared (cf. Mark 8:32). “Must” (*dei*, “it is necessary”) denotes compulsion. In this context it refers to the compulsion of God’s will, the divine plan for Jesus’ messianic mission (cf. 1:11). This prediction shows His submission to it (cf. 14:35–36).

Three groups—the **elders** (influential lay leaders), **chief priests** (Sadducees, cf. 12:18, including former high priests), **teachers of the Law** (scribes, mostly Pharisees)—**constituted the Sanhedrin**, the Jewish supreme court which met in Jerusalem (cf. 11:27; ⁵ 14:53). **Though Peter identified Him as “the Christ” (8:29), Jesus did not discuss the title or the issue of His identity.** Rather, He focused on His mission and used the designation “the Son of Man.” This expression has appeared only twice before in Mark (cf. 2:10, 28). Both times Mark used it to show the significance of an event for his Christian readers. From now on it occurs more often but only when Jesus talked about Himself (cf. 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 [twice], 41, 62).

This title especially suited Jesus’ total mission. It was free of political connotations, thus preventing false expectations. Yet it was sufficiently ambiguous (like a parable) to preserve the balance between concealment and disclosure in Jesus’ life and mission (cf. 4:11–12). It combined the elements of suffering and glory in a way no other designation could. It served to define His unique role as Messiah.

2. Peter’s Rebuke and Jesus’ Counter rebuke (8:32–33) (Matt. 16:22–23)

⁵ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 139–140). Victor Books.

Mark 8:32–33. In contrast with previously veiled allusions (cf. 2:20), Jesus **spoke plainly**, in unambiguous terms, **about** the need for His death and resurrection. **Peter** clearly understood Jesus’ words (8:31), but could not reconcile his view of “Messiah” (v. 29b) with the suffering and death Jesus predicted. So Peter **began to rebuke Him** for this defeatist approach.

Peter’s reaction, which the other disciples probably shared, was a satanic attempt similar to the wilderness temptation (cf. 1:12–13), to divert Jesus from the Cross. **Jesus ... rebuked** (cf. 8:32) **Peter** for the benefit of them all. This was not a personal attack. The words, **Out of My sight**, are literally, ⁶ “Go away behind (after) Me.” This is probably not a command to Peter to take his proper place as a disciple (contrast 1:17; 8:34), for Jesus named **Satan** as the source of Peter’s thoughts. Peter was an unwitting spokesman for Satan because he was setting his **mind** (*phroneō* means “to have a mental disposition for”; cf. Col. 3:2) **not on the things of God**, His ways and purposes (cf. Isa. 55:8–9), **but on the things of men**, human values and viewpoints. The way of the Cross was God’s will and Jesus refused to abandon it.

3. Jesus’ Teaching on the Meaning of Discipleship (8:34–9:1) **(Matt. 16:24–28; Luke 9:23–27)**

A suffering Messiah had important implications for those who would follow Him.

This section contains a series of short sayings concerning personal allegiance to Jesus (cf. Mark 9:43–50; 10:24–31). The main statement (8:34) is followed by four explanatory (*gar*, “for”) clauses (vv. 35–38) and a concluding assurance (9:1). This

⁶ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 140). Victor Books.

instruction was part of the disciples' preparation for future ministry. It also provided encouragement for Mark's readers who were facing persecution in Rome.

Mark 8:34. Jesus summoned **the crowd**, interested onlookers (cf. 4:1, 10–12; 7:14–15), **along with His disciples and** addressed them both. His words, **If anyone** (not just the Twelve) **would come after Me** (cf. 1:17) indicated that Jesus was talking about their following Him as disciples (cf. 1:16–20). He then stated two requirements which, like repent and believe (cf. 1:15), are bound together. Negatively, one **must deny himself** decisively (“deny” is an aorist imper.) saying no to selfish interests and earthly securities.⁷ Self-denial is not to deny one's personality, to die as a martyr, or to deny “things” (as in asceticism). Rather it is the denial of “self,” turning away from the idolatry of self-centeredness and every attempt to orient one's life by the dictates of self-interest (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. “*arneomai*,” 1:469–71). Self-denial, however, is only the negative side of the picture and is not done for its own sake alone.

Positively, one must **take up his cross**, decisively (“take up” is also an aorist imper.) saying yes to God's will and way. Cross-bearing was not an established Jewish metaphor. But the figure was appropriate in Roman-occupied Palestine. It brought to mind the sight of a condemned man who was forced to demonstrate his submission to Rome by carrying part of his cross through the city to his place of execution. Thus “to take up one's cross” was to demonstrate publicly one's submission/obedience to the authority against which he had previously rebelled.

⁷ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 140–141). Victor Books.

Jesus' submission to God's will is the proper response to God's claims over self's claims. For Him it meant death on the cross. Those who follow Him must take up *their* (not His) cross, whatever comes to them in God's will as a follower of Jesus. This does not mean suffering as He did or being crucified as He was. Nor does it mean stoically bearing life's troubles. Rather, it is **obedience to God's will as revealed in His Word, accepting the consequences without reservations for Jesus' sake and the gospel** (cf. 8:35). For some this includes physical suffering and even death, as history has demonstrated (cf. 10:38–39). In Jesus' words, **Follow Me**, "follow" is a present imperative: "(So) let him keep following Me" (cf. 1:17–18; 2:14; 10:21, 52b; cf. "daily" in Luke 9:23). Saying no to self and yes to God is to continue all through one's following Jesus (cf. Rom. 13:14; Phil. 3:7–11).

Mark 8:35. Verses 35–38 each begin with the explanatory Greek *gar* (**for**, trans. only once in the niv). These verses explain Jesus' requirements in verse 34, focusing on entrance into discipleship, leaving one's old allegiance to this life (the crowd), and pledging allegiance to Jesus as a disciple. Paradoxically a person **who wants to save** (from *sōzō*, "preserve") **his life** (*psychēn*, "soul, life") **will lose it**; he will not be saved to eternal life. **But** a person who **loses** (lit., "will lose") **his life** (*psychē*) **for** the sake of Jesus and **the gospel** (cf. 1:1) **will save** (from *sōzō*, "preserve") **it**; he will be saved to eternal life (cf. comments on 10:26–27; 13:13).

Jesus made a word play on the terms "lose" and "life" (*psychē*). The *psychē* on one hand is one's natural physical life but it also refers to one's true self, the essential person that transcends the earthly sphere (cf. 8:36; Matt. 10:28; *tdnt*, s.v. "*psychē*," 9:642–4). One who decides to maintain a self-centered life in this world by refusing Jesus' requirements (Mark 8:34) will ultimately lose his life to eternal ruin.

Conversely a person who will “lose” (give over, “deny himself”) his life (even literally, if necessary) in loyalty to Jesus and the gospel (cf. 10:29) by accepting His requirements (8:34) will actually preserve it forever. As a follower of Jesus, he is heir to eternal life forever with God (cf. 10:29–30; Rom. 8:16–17).

Mark 8:36–37. Jesus used penetrating rhetorical questions and economic terms to show the supreme value of eternal life and to reinforce the paradox of verse 35. For (*gar*, confirming v. 35) **what good** (lit., “benefit, profit”) **is it for a man** (generic, “person”) **to gain the whole world**, all earthly pleasures and possessions,⁸ if this were possible, and **yet forfeit** (lit., “suffer the loss of”) **his soul** (*psychēn*) not gaining eternal life with God? The expected answer: “It is no good!” (Cf. Ps. 49, esp. vv. 16–20.) For (*gar*, confirming Mark 8:36) **what can a man** (generic, “person”) **give in exchange for his soul** (*psychēs*), for eternal life with God? The answer: Nothing, because having “gained the world” he has in the end irrevocably lost eternal life with God, with nothing to compensate for it.

Mark 8:38. Structurally this verse parallels and complements verse 35 by carrying the thought to its ultimate consequence. For (*gar*, confirming v. 35) a person who is **ashamed of** (denies) Jesus **and His words** (cf. 13:31) **in this adulterous** (spiritually unfaithful) **and sinful generation** (*genea*; cf. 8:12; Matt. 12:39; Isa. 1:4; Hosea 1:2), **the Son of Man** (cf. comments on Mark 8:31) **will also be ashamed of him when** (lit., “whenever”) **He comes in His Father’s glory** (visibly invested with God’s splendor), **with the holy angels** (cf. 13:26–27).

⁸ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 141). Victor Books.

Clearly Jesus (cf. “Me, My”) and the Son of Man are the *same* Person (cf. 14:41b–42, 62). The veiled reference to His future role as Judge was appropriate because of the crowd’s presence. To be “ashamed” of Jesus is to reject Him (cf. 8:34–35a) and to retain allegiance to “this generation” because of unbelief and fear of the world’s contempt. In return, when Jesus comes in glory as the awesome Judge, He will refuse to claim those as His own (cf. Matt. 7:20–23; Luke 13:22–30), and they will experience shame (cf. Isa. 28:16; 45:20–25; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6, 8).

Mark 9:1. This verse is the positive side of 8:38 (cf. Matt. 10:32–33; Luke 12:8–9) and provides a reassuring conclusion to this section⁹ (Mark 8:34–9:1). The words **And He said to them** (cf. 2:27) introduce an authoritative statement by Jesus. He predicted that **some who** stood there listening to Him would **not** (lit., “by no means,” *ou mē*) **taste death before** (lit., “until”) **they** saw a powerful display of God’s kingdom. The words “taste death” are a Hebrew idiom for experiencing physical death, like a fatal poison that all must take sooner or later (cf. Heb. 2:9).

Several interpretations have been suggested for the meaning of **the kingdom of God come with power**:

- (a) Jesus’ transfiguration,
- (b) Jesus’ resurrection and Ascension,
- (c) the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4) and the spread of Christianity by the early church,
- (d) the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in a.d. 70, and
- (e) the second coming of Jesus Christ.

⁹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 141–142). Victor Books.

The first of these is the most reasonable view in this context. The specific time reference in the following account of Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:2a) indicates that Mark understood a definite connection between Jesus' prediction (v. 1) and this event. Jesus' transfiguration was a striking preview and guarantee of His future coming in glory (cf. 2 Peter 1:16–19).

4. Jesus' Transfiguration (9:2–13) (Matt. 17:1–13; Luke 9:28–36)

a. His Glory Displayed (9:2–8)

This event confirmed Peter's confession (8:29) and fulfilled Jesus' prediction (9:1). *It also served as a prelude to Jesus' Passion* (14:1–16:8). Despite His impending death (8:31–32), He assured them by this event that His return in glory (8:38b) was certain and that their commitment to Him was well-founded (8:34–37). Future glory would follow present suffering for Him *and* them.

Mark 9:2–4. The words, **after six days** link the transfiguration to Jesus' prediction in verse 1. The event occurred on the *seventh* day after the prediction—a day reminiscent of fulfillment and special revelation (cf. Ex. 24:15–16). Matthew gave the same time sequence but Luke stated that the transfiguration occurred “about eight days” later (Luke 9:28). Luke's general reference reflects an alternate method of measuring time in which part of a day was counted as a whole day (see comments on Luke 9:28).

Jesus selected **Peter, James, and John** (cf. Mark 5:37; 14:33) and took them up a **high mountain where they were all alone** (*kat' idian*; cf. 4:34). The unnamed location was probably a southern ridge of Mount Hermon (ca. 9,200 feet) about 12 miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi (cf. 8:27; 9:30, 33). This is preferable to Mount

Tabor in Galilee. The “high mountain” was an appropriate site in view of God’s previous self-disclosure to Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai (Horeb; cf. Ex. 24:12–18; 1 Kings 19:8–18).

Jesus **was transfigured** *in the presence of the three disciples* (cf. 2 Peter 1:16).

“Transfigured” (*metemorphōthē*, cf. Eng. “metamorphosis”) means “to be changed into another form,” *not merely a change in outward appearance* (cf. Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). For a brief time Jesus’ human body was transformed (glorified) and the disciples saw Him as He will be when He returns visibly in power and glory to establish His kingdom on earth (cf. Acts 15:14–18; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; Rev. 1:14–15; 19:15; 20:4–6). This was dramatically portrayed by the supra-earthly whiteness of **His clothes**—a comment unique to Mark, probably reflecting Peter’s eyewitness report.

Two significant Old Testament men, **Elijah and Moses**, appeared miraculously and were conversing **with Jesus** (cf. Luke 9:31). Mark’s mentioning Elijah first is likely due to his emphasis on Elijah in this context (cf. Mark 8:28; 9:11–13). Moses, in the role of Israel’s deliverer and lawgiver, represented the Law. Elijah, defender of Yahweh worship and the future restorer of all things (Mal. 4:4–5), represented the Prophets. Both were prominent mediators of God’s rule to the nation of Israel (cf. Ex. 3:6; 4:16; 7:1; Deut. 18:15–18; 1 Kings 19:13; Acts 7:35). Their presence attested Jesus’ role as the Messiah.

Mark 9:5–6. Peter’s impulsive response, using the Hebrew title **Rabbi** (cf. 11:21; 14:45; also cf. “Teacher” in 4:38; 9:17; 10:35; 13:1), indicates that he did not understand this event. He said **it was good for them to be** there, implying that he

wished to prolong the glorious experience. His idea that they build **three shelters** (tents of meeting, booths; cf. Lev. 23:33–43), **one** each **for** Jesus, **Moses**, and **Elijah**, confirms this and may imply that he viewed all three as being equal in importance. Thinking the kingdom had come, **Peter** felt it appropriate to build booths for the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). Unwittingly or not, Peter (cf. Mark 8:32) was again resisting the suffering which Jesus had said would precede the glory.

Mark's explanatory (*gar*, "for") comment is set off as a parenthesis. It shows that Peter, as spokesman, responded inappropriately because (*gar*) **they were so frightened** (*ekphoboi*, "terrified," a strong adjective used only here and in Heb. 12:21 where it is trans. "fear"; cf. the verb *phobeomai*, "be afraid," in Mark 4:41; 16:8) by this dazzling display of supernatural glory.

Mark 9:7–8. God the Father's response to Peter's suggestion set forth the true meaning¹⁰ of this event. The **cloud** that **enveloped them** (Jesus, Moses, Elijah) signified God's awesome presence (cf. Ex. 16:10; 19:9) and from it came His commanding **voice**. Once again, as at Jesus' baptism, the Father placed His unqualified endorsement on His beloved **Son** (cf. comments on Mark 1:11). Jesus' sonship sets Him above all other men including Moses and Elijah.

Listen to Him (pres. imper.), actually means, "Be obedient to Him." This reflects the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. Deut. 18:19, 22 also) and serves to identify Jesus as the new and final Mediator of God's rule in its present and future form (cf.

¹⁰ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 143). Victor Books.

Ps. 2:4–7; 2 Peter 1:16–19). Jesus succeeded Moses and Elijah, who suddenly disappeared leaving no one **except Jesus**. Their work was done and they were superseded. Jesus, not Moses or Elijah, is now God’s authorized Ruler and Spokesman.

b. His command to silence (9:9–10)

Mark 9:9. On their descent from **the mountain Jesus** told the three disciples to keep silent about **what they had seen** till after His resurrection. Their misunderstanding of His messianic mission (8:29–33) was still evident at the transfiguration (cf. 9:5–6, 10; and comments on 8:30).

This was Jesus’ last command to silence recorded by Mark and the only one on which He set a time limit. This implied that a time of proclamation (cf. 13:10; 14:9) would follow this period of silence. **Only from the perspective of the Resurrection would they understand the transfiguration and thus be able to proclaim its meaning correctly.**

Mark 9:10. The three disciples were perplexed by Jesus’ command. **They kept** discussing among **themselves ... what “rising from the dead” meant**. They believed in a future resurrection, but were puzzled by the unexpected announcement of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

c. His Declaration about Elijah (9:11–13)

Mark 9:11. The presence of Elijah at the transfiguration (v. 4), the confirmation of Jesus as Messiah (8:29; 9:7), and His reference to the Resurrection (v. 9) suggested that the end of all things was near. If so, where was **Elijah** who **must come first** to

prepare the nation spiritually for the Messiah's coming? (cf. Mal. 3:1–4; 4:5–6)
Perhaps the disciples thought Elijah's work of renewal would mean the Messiah would not need to suffer.

Mark 9:12–13. In reply, **Jesus** made two things clear. First, He acknowledged on the one hand that **Elijah does come** (lit., “is coming”) **first** (before the Messiah) **and restores** (“is going to restore”) **all things** through spiritual renewal (Mal. 4:5–6). On the other hand, this does not remove the necessity for **the Son of Man to suffer much and be rejected** (cf. Ps. 22; Isa. 53, esp. v. 3).

Second, however (**but** in Gr. is a strong adversative), Jesus declared that indeed **Elijah has come** already. In a veiled way Mark recorded how Jesus identified John the Baptist as the one who fulfilled at Jesus' First Advent the role function expected of the end-time Elijah (cf. Mark 1:2–8; Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:17). Jesus gave John his true significance which John did not even recognize about himself (cf. John 1:21; comments on Matt. 11:14).

The expression, **They have done to him everything they wished**, denotes the ruthless, arbitrary suffering and death John experienced at the hands of Herod Antipas and Herodias (cf. Mark 6:14–29). In like manner Elijah suffered persecution at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 19:1–3, 10).¹¹ What these antagonists did to Elijah and John, people hostile to God would do to Jesus. John the Baptist fulfilled the Elijah prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6) typically at Christ's First Advent. Yet

¹¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 143–144). Victor Books.

Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6) indicates that Elijah himself will also appear just before Christ's Second Advent (cf. Rev. 11).

5. The Cure of a Demon-Possessed Boy (9:14–29) (Matt. 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–43)

This episode of desperate human need and the disciples' failure contrasts sharply with the glory of the transfiguration. It shows the reality of living in the world in the absence of Jesus. The disciples from whom help could be expected (cf. Mark 6:7) were powerless. Mark 9:28–29 provides the key to understanding this incident. In Jesus' absence they must live and work by faith in God, expressed through prayer. The extended account (in contrast with Matt. and Luke) and the vivid details once again suggest the input of Peter's eyewitness report.

Mark 9:14–15. When Jesus and the three disciples (cf. v. 2) returned to the other nine disciples, they saw a large crowd gathered around the nine and Law teachers arguing with them. The subject of the dispute is not stated. As soon as (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) the crowd saw Jesus they became greatly amazed (*exethambēthēsan*, "alarmed"; cf. 14:33; 16:5–6) and ran to greet Him. Their astonishment was not due to some afterglow from the transfiguration (cf. 9:9) but to the unexpected yet opportune presence of Jesus in their midst.

Mark 9:16–18. Jesus asked the nine what the ¹² argument was about. A man in the crowd, the father of the demon-possessed boy, explained the situation to Jesus. Respectfully addressing Jesus as Teacher (cf. v. 5), the father said he had brought his

¹² Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 144). Victor Books.

son to Jesus for healing because the boy was **possessed by a spirit** (cf. comments on 1:23–24) who deprived **him of** his power of **speech** (and hearing; cf. 9:25). Also the demon often convulsed him with violent seizures symptomatic of epilepsy. The demon's attempts to destroy the lad (cf. vv. 18, 21–22, 26) show again the purpose of demon possession (cf. comments on 5:1–5). **The father's appeal to the disciples to exorcise the demon was legitimate because Jesus had given them authority over evil spirits** (cf. 6:7).

Mark 9:19. Jesus addressed the crowd but especially His disciples with deep emotion (cf. 3:5; 8:12). **O unbelieving generation** emphasizes the characteristic cause of all spiritual failure—lack of faith in God (cf. 9:23; 10:27). The rhetorical questions further reflect Jesus' continued distress over His disciples' spiritual dullness (cf. 4:40; 6:50–52; 8:17–21). Yet He intended to act with power where they had failed, so He commanded, **Bring the boy to Me.**

Mark 9:20–24. When the demonic spirit saw Jesus, he immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **threw the lad into a violent seizure**, reducing him to utter helplessness (cf. 9:18). In reply to Jesus' compassionate inquiry, the **father** said his son had experienced such pathetic and near-fatal convulsions **from childhood**. The lad's condition was long-standing and critical. The words, **If You can do anything**, indicate that the disciples' inability to expel the demon (v. 18) had shaken the father's faith in Jesus' ability. **Jesus took up the father's words of doubt,**

If You can, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible (cf. 10:27). **Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: Everything is possible for him who believes** (cf.

9:29). Faith sets no limits on God's power and submits itself to His will (cf. 14:35–36; 1 John 5:14–15). The father's response was immediate (*euthys*). He declared his faith (**I do believe**), but also acknowledged its weakness: **Help me overcome my unbelief!** This brings out an essential element of Christian faith—it is possible only with the help of the One who is its Object.

Mark 9:25–27. When Jesus saw that a curious crowd was converging on the scene (apparently He had withdrawn briefly), He rebuked (“ordered”; cf. 1:25) the evil (lit., “unclean”; cf. 1:23, 34) spirit with two commands: **come out ... and never enter him again.** With a final burst of violence on his victim and a scream of rage (cf. 1:26), the demon fled. The boy lay limp in utter exhaustion looking like a corpse so that many concluded, **He's dead. But Jesus ... lifted him ... up.** Mark's parallel wording in the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter (cf. 5:39–42) suggests that breaking from Satan's power is like passing from death to life. To accomplish this in a final, irreversible sense necessitated the death and resurrection of Jesus Himself.

Mark 9:28–29. These verses conclude this incident and explain why the disciples failed. After going indoors (lit., “into the house”; cf. 7:17; the location is unnamed) the disciples asked Jesus privately (*kat' idian*; cf. 4:34) why they could not expel the demon. Jesus explained, **This kind**—probably ¹³ demonic spirits in general rather than a special type of demon—**can come out only** (lit., “is not able to come out by anything except ...”) **by prayer.** The disciples had failed because they had not

¹³ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 144–145). Victor Books.

prayerfully depended on God's power. Apparently they had trusted in past successes (cf. 6:7, 13) and had failed.

Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts have "prayer and fasting" at the end of 9:29 (niv marg.). Perhaps the words were added early by some scribes to the textual tradition to support asceticism. But the words, if original, refer to a practical means of focusing one's attention more fully on God for a specific purpose, for a limited period of time.

B. The Second Passion Prediction Unit (9:30–10:31)

1. Jesus' second prediction of his death and resurrection (9:30–31) (Matt. 17:22–23a; Luke 9:43b–44)

Mark 9:30–31. Jesus and His disciples **left that place** (cf. vv. 14, 28, probably near Caesarea Philippi) **and** were passing **through** northeastern **Galilee** (cf. 1:9), heading toward Capernaum (9:33). This was the first leg of their final journey southward to Jerusalem. **Jesus** wanted to keep their presence from becoming known **because** His public ministry in Galilee had ended and now **He** wished to prepare **His disciples** for the future.

His coming death was a constant theme of His **teaching** on this journey. He said that He, **the Son of Man** (cf. 8:31) would **be betrayed** to both Jews and Gentiles.

"Betrayed" (*paradidotai*) means "deliver up" or "hand over." It was used both of Judas' betrayal of Jesus (3:19; 14:41; Luke 24:7) and of God's delivering up Jesus to

death for the ¹⁴ redemption of sinners (Isa. 53:6, 12; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:32). The latter idea is probably intended here, suggesting that the implied Agent of the passive verb is God, not Judas.

2. The disciples' lack of understanding (9:32) (Matt. 17:23b; Luke 9:45)

Mark 9:32. The disciples failed to **understand what Jesus meant** (cf. v. 10) and were **afraid to** inquire further. Perhaps this was because they remembered Jesus' rebuke of Peter (8:33) or, more likely, because His words had a devastating effect on their hopes for a reigning Messiah.

3. Jesus' lessons on the meaning of discipleship (9:33–10:31)

This section has two geographical settings. First, Jesus taught His disciples in a house in Capernaum, Galilee (9:33–50). Second, Jesus resumed a public as well as a private teaching ministry in Judea and Perea (10:1–31).

a. The essence of true greatness (9:33–37) (Matt. 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–48)

Mark 9:33–34. Jesus and His disciples **came to Capernaum** for the last time after an absence of several months (cf. 8:13, 22, 27). **When they were in the house** (cf. 2:1–2; 3:20; 7:17) Jesus candidly **asked them what they were ... arguing about on the road** (*en tē hodō*, “on the way”; cf. comments on 1:2). Once again His pointed question opened the way for additional teaching (cf. 8:27, 29).

¹⁴ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 145). Victor Books.

The disciples were ashamed to admit **they had argued about who was the greatest** among them. Matters of rank were important to the Jews (cf. Luke 14:7–11) so it was natural for the disciples to be concerned about their status in the coming messianic kingdom. Perhaps the privileges given to Peter, James, and John (cf. Mark 5:37; 9:2) fueled the argument. **Whatever its cause, it showed that the Twelve did not understand or accept what Jesus' Passion prediction (cf. v. 31) meant for them.**

Mark 9:35. After **sitting down**, the recognized position of a Jewish teacher (cf. Matt. 5:1; 13:1), **Jesus** summoned **the Twelve**. He taught them the essence of true greatness: **If anyone wants** (cf. Mark 8:34) **to be first**, to have the highest position among the “great” in God’s kingdom, **he must be the very last** (lit., “he shall be last of all,” by deliberate, voluntary choice) **and the servant of all**. Here “servant” (*diakonos*) depicts one who attends to the needs of others freely, not one in a servile position (as a *doulos*, a slave). Jesus did not condemn the desire to improve one’s position in life but He did teach that greatness in His kingdom was not determined by status but by service (cf. 10:43–45).

Mark 9:36–37. To illustrate servanthood Jesus set **a little child** from the home (cf. v. 33, perhaps Peter’s child) **among** the disciples. To be a “servant of all” included giving attention to a child, the least (cf. “the very last,” v. 35) significant person in Jewish as well as Greco-Roman society which idealized the mature adult (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. “*pais*,” 5:639–52).

Jesus took the child **in His arms** (cf. 10:13–16). To welcome, that is, to serve or show kindness to (cf. 6:11; Luke 9:53) **one of these little children**, who represented the lowliest disciple (cf. Mark 9:42), **in Jesus’ name** (on His behalf) is equivalent to

welcoming Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 25:40 and comments on Mark 6:7). But to do this was not to **welcome** Jesus *only* but also the heavenly Father **who sent** Him to earth (cf. John 3:17; 8:42). This gives dignity to the task of serving others.¹⁵

b. The Rebuke of a Sectarian Attitude (9:38–42) (Luke 9:49–50)

Mark 9:38. Jesus' words (v. 37) prompted **John** (cf. 3:17; 5:37; 9:2), addressing Him as **Teacher** (cf. 4:38; 9:5), to report an attempt by the disciples **to stop** an anonymous exorcist from **driving out demons in Jesus' name** (cf. comments on 1:23–28; 5:6–7). They did this **because he was not one of** them; he was a disciple but not one of the Twelve commissioned by Jesus to do this work (cf. 6:7, 12–13). It was not the man's misuse of Jesus' name (as in Acts 19:13–16) that troubled them but rather his *unauthorized* use of the name. Furthermore, he was successful (in contrast with the nine; Mark 9:14–18). This incident revealed the Twelve's narrow exclusivism.

Mark 9:39–40. Jesus told them to **stop** hindering this exorcist because **no one** performs a **miracle** (*dynamis*, a mighty "deed") **in His name** and then immediately turns around and publicly speaks evil of Him. Jesus' acceptance of this man was reinforced by the maxim, **Whoever is not against us is for us** (cf. the reverse of this in Matt. 12:30). "Against us" and "for us" leave no room for neutrality. If one is working for Jesus, in His name (cf. Mark 9:38), he cannot work against Him at the same time. *Though this man did not follow Jesus in exactly the same way as the Twelve, he nevertheless followed Him truly and stood against Satan.*

¹⁵ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 146). Victor Books.

Mark 9:41. With a solemn affirmation (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) Jesus broadened His words (in 9:39–40) to include activity besides exorcism. Even one who performs the smallest act of hospitality in Jesus’ name (cf. v. 37), such as giving **a cup of water** to someone **because** he belongs **to Christ will** ¹⁶ **certainly not** (*ou mē*, emphatic negation) **lose his reward**. He will ultimately be recompensed by participation in God’s kingdom (cf. v. 47; 10:29–30; Matt. 25:34–40), not on the basis of merit (a good deed) but because of God’s gracious promise to people of faith (cf. Luke 12:31–32). Jesus’ use of the title “Christ” instead of “Son of Man” is rare in the Synoptic Gospels.

Mark 9:42. This verse concludes the thought in verses 35–41 and sets the stage for verses 43–50. Jesus sternly warned **anyone** who would deliberately turn somebody away from believing in Him. The punishment for such an offense was so severe that **it would be better for him to be** drowned in **the sea** before he could cause **one of these little ones who believe in** Jesus (i.e., lowly disciples, including children, who are immature in faith; cf. vv. 37, 41) **to sin**.

The verb “cause to sin” (*skandalisē*; cf. v. 43) must be understood from a future judgment viewpoint (cf. vv. 43–48). It refers to enticing or provoking a disciple to turn away from Jesus, resulting in serious spiritual damage. The undeveloped faith of the exorcist (v. 38) or anyone else who acts in Jesus’ name (v. 41) should be encouraged rather than ruined by harsh criticism or sectarian bias. The **large millstone** (*mylos onikos*, lit., “donkey millstone”) was a heavy, flat stone turned by a

¹⁶ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 146). Victor Books.

donkey when it was grinding grain; this differed from the small hand mill (*mylos*) used by women (Matt. 24:41). Punishment by drowning someone this way was no doubt familiar to Jesus' disciples (cf. Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 14. 15. 10).

***c. The Snare of Sin and the Radical Demands of Discipleship (9:43–50)
(Matt. 18:7–9).***

Mark 9:43–48. These strong words warn disciples ¹⁷ about the danger of letting *themselves* be led astray. Jesus reinforced the demands of discipleship (cf. 8:34–38; 10:24–31) in hyperboles (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. “*melos*,” 4:559–61).

If (*ean*, “whenever,” indicating a real possibility) the activity of **your hand**, an instrument of inward inclinations (cf. 7:20–23), **causes you to sin** (*skandalisē*, “should entice you to fall away”; cf. 9:42) then **cut it off**. Jesus meant a disciple should take prompt, decisive action against whatever would draw him away from his allegiance to Him. The same is true of the **foot** and the **eye**, for temptations come through various means. Whatever *tempts* a disciple to cling to this world's life must be removed much as a surgeon amputates a gangrenous limb.

It is better to be a disciple and **to enter eternal life** (cf. 10:17, 30) in God's future **kingdom** (9:47), and to do so **maimed**, minus earthly possessions that have been renounced, **than to** be an unbeliever. An unbeliever retains his allegiance to this world, refuses eternal **life** with God on His terms, **and** so will be **thrown into hell** (*geennan*; vv. 45, 47).

¹⁷ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 146–147). Victor Books.

The Greek word *geenna* (“Gehenna,” trans. “hell”) is transliterated from two Hebrew words meaning “Valley of Hinnom,” a place south of Jerusalem where children were once sacrificed to the pagan god Molech (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 19:5–6; 32:35). Later, during the reforms of Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) the site became Jerusalem’s refuse dump where fires burned continually to consume regular deposits of worm-infested garbage. *In Jewish thought the imagery of fire and worms vividly portrayed the place of future eternal punishment for the wicked* (cf. the apocryphal Judith 16:17 and Ecclesiasticus 7:17). **Jesus used the word *geenna* in 11 of its 12 New Testament occurrences** (the one exception is James 3:6).

Where the fire never goes out is probably Mark’s explanation of Gehenna for his Roman readers. The **worm** (internal torment) and **the unquenchable fire** (external torment) (quoted from the LXX of Isa. 66:24) vividly portray the unending, conscious punishment that awaits all who refuse God’s salvation. The essence of hell is unending torment and eternal exclusion from His presence.

Mark 9:49. This enigmatic statement, unique to Mark, is difficult to interpret. About 15 possible explanations have been suggested. An explanatory “for” (*gar*, not trans. in the niv) and the word “fire” link this verse to verses 43–48. **Everyone** may be explained in one of three ways:

(1) It could refer to every unbeliever who enters hell. They **will be salted with fire** in the sense that as salt preserves food so they will be preserved throughout an eternity of fiery judgment.

(2) “Everyone” could refer to every disciple living in this hostile world.

They will be “salted with fire” in the sense that Old Testament sacrifices were seasoned with salt (Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24). Disciples, living sacrifices (cf. Rom. 12:1),

will be seasoned with purifying fiery trials (cf. Prov. 27:21; Isa. 48:10; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12). The trials will purge out what is contrary to God’s will and preserve what is consistent with it.

(3) “Everyone” could refer to every person in general. All will be “salted with fire” in a time and manner appropriate to their relationship with Jesus—for nonbelievers, the preserving fire of final judgment; for disciples, the refining fire of present trials and suffering. This last view seems preferable.

Mark 9:50. “Salt” links this verse to verse 49.¹⁸ **Salt is good**, useful. Salt as a condiment and a preservative was common in the ancient world. It was a necessity of life in Palestine, so it had commercial value.

The main source of salt in Palestine was from the area southwest of the Dead (Salt) Sea. The coarse, impure salt from the saline deposits of this area was susceptible to deterioration, leaving savorless saltlike crystals as residue. **If** (*ean*, “whenever”; cf. v. 43) **it loses its saltiness**, its savory quality, it cannot be regained so such salt is worthless.

Have salt in yourselves (pres. imper.) points to the disciples’ need to “have salt” which is good (not worthless) *within* themselves continually. Here “salt” depicts what distinguishes a disciple from a nondisciple (cf. Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34). A disciple is to maintain his allegiance to Jesus at all costs and to purge out destructive influences (cf. Mark (9:43–48)).

¹⁸ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 147–148). Victor Books.

The second command, **Be at peace** (pres. imper.) **with each other** is based on the first command and rounds out the discussion provoked by the disciples' strife (vv. 33–34). In essence Jesus said, "Be loyal to Me and then you will be able to maintain peace with one another instead of arguing about status" (cf. Rom. 12:16a; 14:19).

d. The Permanence of Marriage (10:1–12) (Matt. 19:1–12; Luke 16:18).

Mark 10:1. On Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, He **left that place**, Capernaum in Galilee (cf. 9:33), **and went into ... Judea** west of the Jordan River **and then across the Jordan** into Perea on the east side.

Because of His popularity in these areas (cf. 3:8) He drew **crowds of people** around Him **again** and **as was His custom** (cf. 1:21–22; 2:13; 4:1–2; 6:2, 6b, 34; 11:17; 12:35) **He taught them** again. The second "again," left untranslated in the NIV, was included¹⁹ for emphasis. Thus He resumed His public ministry (cf. 9:30–31). Though Jesus' later Judean and Perea ministries covered a span of about six months, Mark recorded only some of the closing events which probably occurred in Perea (cf. 10:2–52 with Luke 18:15–19:27).

Mark 10:2. A group of **Pharisees** questioned Jesus about **divorce** in order to test (from *peirazō*; cf. 8:11; 12:15b) **Him**. *They wanted Him to give a self-incriminating answer that would arouse opposition against Him.* Perhaps He would contradict Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (cf. Mark 10:4). All Pharisees agreed that this Old Testament passage permitted divorce, that only the husband could initiate it, and that divorce

¹⁹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 148). Victor Books.

implied the right to remarry. But they disagreed on the grounds of divorce. The strict view of Rabbi Shammai allowed divorce only if a wife were guilty of immorality; the lenient view of Rabbi Hillel allowed a husband to divorce his wife for almost any reason (cf. Mishnah *Gittin* 9. 10). Perhaps Jesus would take sides in this dispute and thereby split the ranks of His followers. Or perhaps He would offend Herod Antipas as John the Baptist had done (cf. 6:17–19) and be arrested since He was under Herod’s jurisdiction in Perea. Herod had married his half-niece Herodias despite the decrees in Leviticus 18.

Mark 10:3–4. Jesus’ counterquestion set aside the casuistry of Rabbinic interpretation and directed the Pharisees to the Old Testament (cf. 7:9, 13). The verb **command** indicates **He** asked about Mosaic legislation on the divorce issue.

In response, they summarized Deuteronomy 24:1–4, the basis for their divorce practices. They believed that **Moses permitted a** husband to divorce his wife if he protected her from the charge of adultery by writing out **a certificate of divorce** in the presence of witnesses, signing it, and giving it to her (cf. Mishnah *Gittin* 1. 1–3; 7. 2). In ancient Israel adultery was punishable by death, usually stoning (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–25), when guilt was clearly established (cf. Num. 5:11–31). By Jesus’ time (ca. a.d. 30) the death penalty was dropped (cf. Matt. 1:19–20; *tdnt*, s.v. “*moicheuō*,” 4:730–5), but Rabbinic law compelled a husband to divorce an adulterous wife (cf. Mishnah *Sotah* 1. 4–5; *Gittin* 4. 7).

Mark 10:5. **Moses wrote ... this Law** (Deut. 24:1–4), **Jesus** said, in view of their hardheartedness, their obstinate refusal to accept God’s view of marriage. Moses *acknowledged* the presence of divorce in Israel but did not institute or authorize it.

Mark 10:6–8. *Jesus then contrasted their view of marriage with God’s view from the beginning of Creation* (Jesus quoted both Gen. 1:27 and 2:24). **God made them**, the first couple, Adam and Eve, distinctly **male and female** yet fully complementary to each other. **A man shall leave behind his parents, shall be united to his wife, and the two—man and woman—will become one flesh.** As “one flesh” they form a new unit comprising a sexually intimate, all-encompassing couple just as indissoluble in God’s present Creation order as a blood relationship between parent and child. **So** (*hōste*, “so then”) **they are no longer two, but one** (lit., “one flesh,” a one-flesh unit). Marriage is not a contract of temporary convenience which can be readily broken; it is a covenant of mutual fidelity to a lifelong union made before God (cf. Prov. 2:16–17; Mal. 2:13–16).

Mark 10:9. Jesus then added a prohibition. **Therefore**, in light of verses 6–8, **what God has joined together as one flesh, let man** ²⁰ **not separate** (*chōrizetō*, pres. tense; cf. this Gr. verb in 1 Cor. 7:10, 15). “Man” (*anthrōpos*, probably meaning the husband) is to stop disrupting marriage through divorce. Marriage is to be a monogamous, heterosexual, permanent one-flesh relationship. Jesus indirectly confirmed John the Baptist’s courageous pronouncement (cf. Mark 6:18), contradicting the Pharisees’ lax views.

Mark 10:10–12. Later, **when** Jesus’ **disciples** questioned Him privately **about this subject in the house** (cf. 7:17), **He** added, **Anyone who divorces** (*apolysē*, “releases,” same word in 15:6, 9, 15) **his wife and marries another woman commits adultery**

²⁰ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 148–149). Victor Books.

against her, his first wife (cf. Ex. 20:14, 17). According to Mark 10:12, which is unique to Mark, the same applies to a woman who **divorces her husband and marries another man**. These words were significant for Mark's Roman readers since under Roman law a wife could initiate divorce. Though not allowed under Jewish law such action was sometimes practiced in Palestine (e.g., Herodias, 6:17–18).

Divorce violates God's Creation ordinance, but does not dissolve it. *Jesus left open the possibility of divorce for sexual immorality* as demanded by Jewish law in New Testament times (10:4). But remarriage, though permitted under Rabbinic law, was here forbidden by Jesus (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. "*gameō, gamos*," 1:648–51; "*moicheuō*," 4:733–5). (Many interpreters believe that Jesus gave one exception to this. See comments on Matt. 5:32; 19:1–12.) God's desire for a "broken" marriage is forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. Hosea 1–3; 1 Cor. 7:10–11).

e. The Reception of God's Kingdom in Childlike Trust (10:13–16)
(Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17)

This episode complemented Jesus' teaching on marriage and offset the Pharisees' opposition (Mark 10:2–12). It probably took place "in the house" (v. 10). The incident came to be used in later church history in connection with infant baptism but without clear warrant from the passage.

Mark 10:13. People—mothers, fathers, older children, and others—**were bringing little children** (*paidia*, those ranging from babies to preteens, cf. same word in 5:39; a different word *brephē*, meaning infants and young children, is used in Luke 18:15) **to Jesus** in order that He might **touch them**, a visible means of conveying God's blessing on their future lives (cf. Mark 10:16). **The disciples rebuked them** (cf. 8:30,

32–33) and tried to keep them from going to Jesus. They probably thought children were unimportant (cf. 9:36–37) and should not waste His time—another instance where they thought only in human-cultural categories (cf. 8:32–33; 9:33–37).

Mark 10:14. Jesus ... **was indignant** (cf. v. 41) at the disciples' interference (cf. 9:38). This verb of strong emotional reaction is unique to Mark who highlighted Jesus' emotions more than the other Gospel writers (cf. 1:25, 41, 43; 3:5; 7:34; 8:12; 9:19). Jesus' sharp double command—**Let** (lit., “start allowing”) **the little children come to Me, and do not hinder** (lit., “stop preventing”) **them**—was a rebuke to the disciples (who had rebuked the people!). Jesus welcomed the children because **the kingdom of God**, God's present spiritual rule in people's lives (cf. comments on 1:14–15), **belongs** as a possession **to such as these**. All, including children, who come to Jesus in childlike trust and dependence, are given free access to Jesus.

Mark 10:15. In a solemn pronouncement (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) Jesus developed the truth in 10:14. Whoever **will not receive** God's **kingdom** as a gift now with the trustful attitude of a **child will never** (emphatic negative, *ou mē*, “by no means”) **enter it**. He will be excluded from its future blessings, specifically eternal life (cf. vv. 17, 23–26). God's kingdom is not gained by human achievement or merit; it must be received as God's gift through simple trust by those who acknowledge their inability to gain it any other way (cf. comments on 1:15).

Mark 10:16. Jesus' loving action (cf. 9:36) vividly illustrated that His blessing is freely given to those who receive it trustingly. The intensive compound verb **blessed** (*kateulogei*, imperf., occurring only here in the NT) emphasizes the warmhearted fervor with which Jesus blessed each child who came to Him.

f. The Rejection of God's Kingdom by Trust in Riches (10:17–27)
(Matt. 19:16–26; Luke 18:18–27)

This event probably took place as Jesus was leaving the house (cf. Mark 10:10) somewhere in Perea. The rich man illustrated those who fail to acknowledge their own inability to gain eternal life and to receive it as God's gift (cf. vv. 13–16).

Mark 10:17. As Jesus was setting out **on His way** (cf. comments on 8:27) to Jerusalem (10:32) **a man**, influential, wealthy, and young (cf. Matt. 19:20, 22; Luke 18:18), came running **to Him**. His eager approach, kneeling posture, sincere form of address (**Good Teacher**, not used by Jews to address a Rabbi), and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual Guide. This man's question indicated that he viewed **eternal life** as something to be achieved by doing good (in contrast with Mark 10:15; cf. Matt. 19:16) and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny. References to **eternal life** (mentioned in Mark only in 10:17, 30), "entering God's kingdom" (vv. 23–25), and being "saved" (v. 26) all focus on the future possession of life with God, though a person enters it now by accepting God's rule in his earthly life. John's Gospel emphasizes the *present* possession of eternal life.

Mark 10:18. Jesus challenged the man's faulty perception of **good** as something measured by human achievement. **No one is good**, absolutely perfect, **except God alone**, the true Source and Standard of goodness. The man needed to see himself in the context of God's perfect character. Jesus' response did not deny His own deity but was a veiled claim to it. The man, unwittingly calling Him "good," needed to perceive Jesus' true identity. (Later, however, he dropped the word "good," v. 20.)

Mark 10:19–20. In answering the man’s question directly, Jesus quoted five **commandments** from the so-called “second table” of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20) but in a different order. Obedience to those commands dealing with human relationships are more easily verified in a person’s conduct than are the earlier commands (Ex. 20:3–8). The command, **Do not defraud**, not a part of the Decalogue and occurring only in Mark, may represent the 10th commandment (Ex. 20:17). But more likely, it is an appropriate supplement to the 8th and/or 9th commandments (Ex. 20:15–16) applicable to a wealthy person (cf. Lev. 6:2–5; Mal. 3:5).

The man’s reply shows he firmly believed he had **kept** these commandments perfectly (cf. Phil. 3:6) **since** he **was a boy**, since age 12 when he assumed personal responsibility for keeping the Law as a “son of the Law” (*bar Mitzvah*; cf. Luke 2:42–47). Perhaps he had expected Jesus to prescribe something meritorious that he needed to do to make up for any lack.

10:21–22. With a penetrating look (from *emlepō*; cf. 3:5), **Jesus** saw beneath the rich man’s religious devotion to his deepest need **and loved him**, something mentioned only in Mark (cf. comment on 10:14). The **one** necessary **thing** he lacked was unrivaled allegiance to God, since wealth was his god (v. 22). He was devoted to it rather than God, thereby breaking the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).

Jesus commanded two things: **(1)** The man was to **go, sell** all his assets, **and give to the poor**, thereby removing the obstacle blocking him from eternal life, namely, self-righteous achievement coupled with a love for money. **(2)** Also Jesus told him to **follow** (pres. imper.) Him to Jerusalem and the Cross. The way to eternal life was in

turning from trust in self-attainments and earthly securities to trust in Jesus (cf. Mark 10:14–15). The man, saddened by Jesus’ directives, **went away**. This particular *form* of self-denial—to sell all—was appropriate in this situation but is not a requirement for all prospective disciples.

10:23–25. When **Jesus** told the **disciples** that it is **hard ... for the rich to enter** God’s **kingdom**, they **were amazed** (*ethambounto*, “surprised”; cf. 1:27; 10:32) because in Judaism riches were a mark of God’s favor and thus an advantage, not a barrier, in relation to God’s kingdom. Only here in the Synoptic Gospels did **Jesus** address the Twelve as **children** (cf. John 13:33), reflecting ²¹ their spiritual immaturity.

In light of their surprise Jesus repeated and clarified His original statement. If the words “for those who trust in riches” (niv marg.) are omitted, Mark 10:24 (which is unique to Mark) applies to everybody who is confronted with the demands of God’s **kingdom**. If included, they explain the rich man’s difficulty and expose the danger of trusting in riches. The humorous comparison (v. 25) employs a memorable Jewish proverb to depict the impossible. **It is easier** by comparison **for a camel**, the largest animal in Palestine at that time, **to go through the eye of a** common sewing **needle** (the smallest opening) **than for a rich man** who trusts in his riches **to enter** God’s **kingdom**.

Mark 10:26–27. Jesus’ statement (v. 25) greatly **amazed** (*exoplēssonto*, “astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed”; cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 11:18) **the disciples**.

²¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 150–151). Victor Books.

They carried it to its logical conclusion: If it is impossible for a rich man to enter God's kingdom, **Who then can be saved?** (delivered to life eternal; cf. 10:17, 30)

Jesus offset their concern by declaring **that salvation is impossible with men**—beyond their human merit or achievement—**but not with God**. It is not beyond His power to bring about because **all things** necessary for people's salvation—rich and poor alike—**are possible with God** (cf. Job 42:2). What people cannot effect, God can and does by His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8–10).

g. The Rewards of Discipleship (10:28–31) (Matt. 19:27–30; Luke 18:28–30).

Mark 10:28. Acting as spokesman (cf. 8:29) **Peter** presumptuously reminded Jesus that the Twelve, unlike the rich man (**we** is emphatic in Gr., suggesting the contrast), had **left everything to follow** Him (cf. 1:16–20; 2:14; 10:21–22). The implication was, “What recompense shall we get?” (cf. Matt. 19:27) Again this reflected the disciples' tendency to think of material honors in God's kingdom (cf. Mark 9:33–34; 10:35–37; Matt. 19:28–29).

Mark 10:29–30. In another solemn affirmation (**I tell you the truth**; cf. v. 15; 3:28) Jesus acknowledged that their allegiance to Him **and the gospel** (cf. 1:1; 8:35) entailed a break with old ties—**home**, loved ones, or property (**fields**), as the case may be (cf. 13:11–13; Luke 9:59–62). But to everyone who makes the break Jesus promised that all these things will be replaced a hundredfold by new ties with fellow disciples (cf. Mark 3:31–35; Acts 2:41–47; 1 Tim. 5:1–2) **in this present Age**, the time period between Jesus' First and Second Advents. Then **in the Age to come**, the

future Age following Jesus' return (from a NT viewpoint), each will receive the ultimate recompense—**eternal life** (cf. Mark 10:17).

In verse 30 the word “father” (cf. v. 29) is omitted since God is the Father of the new spiritual family (cf. 11:25). The words **with them** (the rewards), **persecutions** are added realistically by Mark alone. As Jesus said later (10:43–45) discipleship involves service, which often includes suffering. This was relevant to Mark's Roman readers who faced persecution. This fact helped remove the temptation to associate with Jesus simply for the rewards (cf. v. 31).

Mark 10:31. This “floating saying” (cf. these same words in other contexts: Matt. 20:16; Luke 13:30) could be intended as (a) a warning against Peter's presumption (Mark 10:28), (b) a confirmation of Jesus' promise (vv. 29–30), or most likely, (c) a summary of Jesus' teaching about the servant nature of discipleship (cf. 9:35; 10:43–45). Rewards in God's kingdom are not based on earthly standards such as rank, priority, or duration of time served, personal merit, or sacrifice (cf. Matt. 20:1–16), but on commitment to Jesus and following Him faithfully.

C. The Third Passion Prediction Unit (10:32–45).

1. Jesus' third prediction of his death and resurrection (10:32–34) (Matt. 20:17–19; Luke 18:31–34).

Mark 10:32a. Jesus and His disciples continued **on their way up** from the Jordan Valley (cf. v. 1) **to Jerusalem**, the first mention of their destination. **Jesus** was **leading** them, in accord with Rabbinic custom. This detail unique to Mark points to Jesus as the One who leads His people both in suffering and in triumph (the same verb is

trans. “go[ing] ahead of” in 14:28 and 16:7). His steadfast determination in the face of impending danger **astonished** (*ethambounto*, “surprised”; cf. 10:24; 1:27) **the disciples**; indeed **those who followed were afraid** (*ephobounto*; cf. 4:40–41; 6:50; 11:18; 16:8). Here Mark probably had *one* group—the Twelve—in mind. In 10:46, he indicated the presence of another group.

Mark 10:32b–34. Once **again** Jesus gathered **the Twelve** (cf. 3:13–15) around Him **and** revealed **what** would soon **happen to Him**. **This third prediction is the most precise and comprehensive of the three Mark recorded** (cf. comments on 8:31; 9:30–31; also see 9:12). Because He understood the Old Testament (cf. Ps. 22:6–8; Isa. 50:6; 52:13–53:12; Luke 18:31) and was aware of the contemporary religio-political climate (cf. Mark 8:15), He was well capable of making this explicit prediction.

Jesus used eight future-tense verbs, implying certainty, in describing the coming events. The new elements were that **the Son of Man** (cf. comments on 8:31) **will be betrayed** (cf. 9:31) into the hands of the *Jewish* leaders, the Sanhedrin (cf. 8:31). **They would condemn Him to death** (cf. 14:64) at the hands of **the Gentiles** (the Romans) since the Sanhedrin lacked the power to exercise capital punishment (cf. 15:1, 9–10). Before executing Him (15:24–25), the Romans would **mock Him** (cf. 15:18, 20), **spit on Him** (cf. 15:19), and **flog Him** (cf. 15:15)—indications that His death would be by crucifixion (cf. Matt. 20:19). But the promise of resurrection offered hope for the future.

2. The Essential Meaning of Discipleship (10:35–45) (Matt. 20:20–28).

Mark 10:35–37. **James and John** (cf. 1:19; 5:37; 9:2) approached Jesus privately, addressing **Him** as **Teacher** (cf. 4:38; 9:5). They asked for the places of highest honor

and authority **in His glory**, the messianic kingdom rule which they expected He was about to establish openly (cf. 8:38; 9:1–2; 13:26). One of them wished to **sit at His right**, the highest assigned position, **and the other at His left**, the next highest place in a royal court (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 6. 11. 9).

Matthew added that their mother came with them and spoke for them (Matt. 20:20–21). She was Salome, probably a sister of Jesus' mother (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). If so, then James and John were Jesus' first cousins. Perhaps they hoped their family ties would help their cause.

Mark 10:38–39. Jesus told them they did **not** realize **what** was involved in their ambitious request. To ask for a place of honor in His glory was also a request to share His suffering since the one is a requisite to the other.

Jesus' question called for a negative response because the sufferings and death facing Him were unique to fulfilling His messianic mission. **The cup was a common Jewish metaphor either for joy (cf. Pss. 23:5; 116:13) or for divine judgment against human sin,** as here (cf. Ps. 75:7–8; Isa. 51:17–23; Jer. 25:15–28; 49:12; 51:7; Ezek. 23:31–34; Hab. 2:16; Zech. 12:2). Jesus applied this figure to Himself for He was to bear the wrath of God's judgment against sin in place of sinners (cf. Mark 10:45; 14:36; 15:34). He would **drink** the "cup" voluntarily.

The figure of **baptism** expresses a parallel thought. Being under water was an Old Testament picture of being overwhelmed by calamity (cf. Job 22:11; Ps. 69:2, 15; Isa. 43:2). Here the "calamity" Jesus faced was bearing the burden of God's judgment on sin which involved overwhelming sufferings culminating in His death (cf. Luke 12:50).

He was to **be baptized** by God who placed these sufferings on Him (Isa. 53:4b, 11). James and John may have thought Jesus was describing a messianic battle and their confident reply, **We can**, showed their willingness to fight in it. But their reply also showed that they had not understood Jesus' words. So **Jesus** applied the same **cup** and **baptism** figures to them but in a different sense. In following Him they would share His sufferings (cf. 1 Peter 4:13) even to death but not in a redemptive sense. His prediction was fulfilled: James was the first apostle to be martyred (cf. Acts 12:2), whereas John, who endured many years of persecution and exile, was the last apostle to die (cf. John 21:20–23; Rev. 1:9).²²

Mark 10:40. Jesus denied their request for positions of honor. Such places were not within His jurisdiction to give. But He assured James and John that God the Father (cf. Matt. 20:23) will assign those positions **to those for whom** the places of honor **have been prepared**.

Mark 10:41–44. **When the other 10** disciples found out **about** James and John's private attempt to gain preferential status, **they became indignant** (cf. v. 14) **with** them. This jealous reaction indicates that they also harbored those selfish ambitions. To avert disharmony among the Twelve and to reemphasize the meaning of true greatness (cf. 9:33–37) **Jesus contrasted greatness in this world's kingdoms with that in God's kingdom**. The contrast is not between two ways of ruling but between ruling (good or bad) and serving.

²² Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 152–153). Victor Books.

Gentile **rulers ... lord it over them**, dominating and oppressing their subjects, and **exercise authority over them**, exploiting them. But it is not to be this way **with** Jesus' followers who are under God's rule. **Whoever** aspires **to become great among you**, let him **be your** (pl.) house **servant** (*diakonos*), one who voluntarily renders useful service to others. **Whoever** aspires **to be first** (lit., "first among you") let him **be a slave** (*doulos*), one who forfeits his own rights in order to serve any and **all** (cf. comments on 9:35–37). A disciple is to serve others, not his own interests, voluntarily and sacrificially.

Mark 10:45. Jesus Himself is the supreme Example of true greatness (in contrast with v. 42). **The Son of Man** (cf. comments on 8:31) voluntarily veiled His glory (cf. 8:38; 13:26) and came as God's Servant (cf. Ps. 49:5–7; Isa. 52:13–53:12; Phil. 2:6–8) **not ... to be served** by others **but to serve** them (cf. Mark 2:17; 10:46–52; Luke 22:27). The climax of His service was His death **as a ransom for many**. He did this voluntarily, sacrificially, vicariously, and obediently (cf. comments on Mark 15:34).

"Ransom" (*lytron*) occurs only here and in Matthew 20:28 in the New Testament. As "the price of release" it refers to a payment to effect the release of slaves or captives from bondage. It also includes the concept of substitution²³ (cf. *tdnt*, s.v. "*lyō*," 4:328–35). **People are captives under the power of sin and death** (cf. Rom. 5:12; 6:20) from which they cannot free themselves. Jesus' substitutionary death paid the price that sets people free (cf. Rom. 6:22; Heb. 2:14–15). (See the chart, "New Testament Words for Redemption.")

²³ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 153–154). Victor Books.

The preposition “for” (*anti*), used in **Mark only here, reinforces the idea of substitution**. It means “instead of, in the place of” (cf. Matt. 2:22; Luke 11:11; 1 Peter 3:9). Jesus gave His life (*psychēn*) in the place of many (cf. Mark 14:24 where *hyper*, “for,” is used). “Many” is used in the inclusive sense of “all” (cf. 1:32–34; Isa. 53:10–12). It emphasizes how a large number derive redemptive benefit from the single sacrifice of the One Redeemer (cf. Rom. 5:15, 18–19). Jesus’ death as a ransom extended beyond His own people to all peoples (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5–6).

***D. Conclusion: The faith of blind Bartimaeus (10:46–52)
(Matt. 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43)***

This is the last healing miracle Mark recorded. It concludes his special section on discipleship (Mark 8:31–10:52) and is an excellent illustration of its meaning (cf. 10:52b). It also signifies that the disciples, despite their misunderstandings (cf. 8:32–33; 9:32; 10:35–41), would have clear sight (i.e., understanding) as **Jesus opened their eyes to the full implications of His messiahship**.

The vividness of the account (e.g., v. 50) suggests that it was an eyewitness report from one such as Peter. The three Synoptic Gospels record this event with some divergent details. Matthew mentioned two blind men (Matt. 20:30), and Luke placed the incident at Jesus’ approach to Jericho instead of His exit (Luke 18:35). Probably two blind men were involved but Mark and Luke focused on one, perhaps the more vocal or well known. Also there were two Jerichos—an old and a new city—and the healings could have occurred as the crowd was leaving old Israelite Jericho (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46) and entering new Herodian Jericho (Luke 18:35), though the evidence that old Jericho was inhabited at that time is not certain.

Mark 10:46. Jesus and His disciples left Perea (cf. v. 1), crossed the Jordan, and **came to Jericho** in Judea. The Jericho of New Testament times, built by Herod the Great as the site for his winter palace, was about 5 miles west of the Jordan River, 1 mile south of the Old Testament city (Josh. 6; 2 Kings 2:4–5, 15–18), and 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

As they and a large crowd, probably Passover pilgrims en route to Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 42:4; Mark 14:1–2), **were leaving** Jericho, presumably **the old city**, they saw a **blind** beggar, **Bartimaeus**, an Aramaic name meaning **the Son of Timaeus**. Only Mark recorded his name, suggesting that perhaps Bartimaeus was known in the early church. He **was sitting** beside **the road begging**, a common sight near wealthy Jericho.

Mark 10:47–48. When Bartimaeus was informed that **Jesus of Nazareth** (cf. 1:24) was passing by, he clamored for His attention and relentlessly shouted for **Jesus to have mercy on him** (cf. Pss. 4:1; 6:2). No doubt he had heard reports that Jesus restored sight. When **many** people kept rebuking (cf. Mark 10:13) **him** to silence him, he cried out **more** intensely. They probably regarded him as a nuisance and may have resented any possible delay. They may also have been opposed to what he was shouting.

Son of David, occurring here for the first time in Mark, designated the Messiah as David's Descendant (2 Sam. 7:8–16) and became a recognized title of the Messiah-King (cf. comments on Mark 12:35–37; also cf. Isa. 11:1–5; Jer. 23:5–6; Ezek. 34:23–24; Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; Rom. 1:3). Bartimaeus' using that title probably indicated that despite his physical blindness he believed Jesus of Nazareth was

Israel's Messiah, in contrast with the blind unbelief of most Jews. Later he addressed Jesus more personally ("Rabbi," Mark 10:51) and followed Him (cf. v. 52b). Jesus did not silence him, implying He accepted the title.

Mark 10:49–52a. Jesus did not ignore Bartimaeus but directed that he be called, a reproof to those (perhaps including the disciples) who were attempting to silence him (cf. v. 14). In Jesus' determined movement toward Jerusalem He had time to serve someone in need (cf. vv. 43–45). The crowd encouraged the beggar: **Cheer up!** (*tharsei*, "be courageous"; cf. 6:50) **On your feet!** (lit., "rise") **He's calling you.** This motivated Bartimaeus to toss aside his outer **cloak** which was spread before him to collect alms, jump up, **and come to Jesus.**

Jesus' question was not designed to get information but to encourage Bartimaeus to articulate his need and express his faith. Bartimaeus' simple response, **Rabbi, I want to see,** declared his confident trust in Jesus' ability. "Rabbi" (*Rhabbouni*) is an emphatic, personal form meaning, "My Lord, my Master" (cf. John 20:16).

Jesus acknowledged his faith: **Go ... your faith has healed** (*sesōken*, "saved") **you.** Faith was the necessary means, not the efficient cause of his healing (cf. comments on Mark 5:34). Bartimaeus' physical "salvation" (i.e., deliverance from darkness [blindness] to light [sight]) was an outward picture ²⁴ of his spiritual "salvation" (cf. Ps. 91:14–16; Luke 3:4–6).

²⁴ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 155). Victor Books.

Mark 10:52b. Immediately (*euthys*, cf. 1:10; contrast 8:22–26) Bartimaeus **received his sight and** began to follow **Jesus along the road** (*en tē hodō*, “on the way”; cf. comments on 1:2). Though he accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem, perhaps to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice in the temple, he also became a “follower” in the sense of a loyal disciple (cf. 8:34). Bartimaeus pictured discipleship clearly. He recognized his inability, trusted Jesus as the One to give him God’s gracious mercy, and when he could “see” clearly he began to follow Jesus.

VII. Jesus’ Ministry in and around Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)

The fifth major section of Mark’s Gospel presents Jesus’ ministry in and around Jerusalem. He denounced the Jewish religious leaders for rejecting God’s messengers, especially the last One, God’s Son. Jesus also warned of God’s impending judgment on Jerusalem and the nation.

The section revolves around three or four days (11:1–11, Sunday; 11:12–19, Monday; 11:20–13:37, Tuesday and probably Wednesday). Precise temporal links are missing between 11:20 and 13:37, suggesting that Mark arranged this material topically, not in strict chronological order (cf. 2:1–3:6). If so, he intended it to be a select summary of Jesus’ teaching, some of which took place on Tuesday and some on Wednesday of His Passion Week (cf. 14:49). The Passion narrative opens with a new chronological starting point (cf. 14:1). The chronological framework for 11:1–16:8 is one week, extending from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

**A. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem (11:1–11) (Matt. 21:1–11;
Luke 19:28–44; John 12:12–19)**

Mark's account of this event exhibits vivid detail but is somewhat restrained in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah (cf. comments on Mark 1:43–44; 8:30–31). Only later (probably after Jesus' resurrection) did His disciples fully understand.

Mark 11:1a. Less than a mile southeast of **Jerusalem** was the village of **Bethphage** (lit., “house of unripe figs”) **and** about two miles out was **Bethany** (lit., “house of dates or figs”) on the eastern side of **the Mount of Olives**, a high ridge about two miles long known for its many olive trees. In Bethany, the last stopping place on the desolate and unsafe road from Jerusalem to Jericho (cf. 10:46), was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1), which generally served as Jesus' abode when He was in Judea (cf. Mark 11:11). Bethany was also the home of Simon the Leper (14:3–9).

Mark 11:1–3. Jesus sent two ... **disciples** (cf. 14:13) into **the village ahead of** (*katenanti*, “opposite,” perhaps across the Mount of Olives from Bethany) them, presumably Bethphage, to find immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) on entry, an unbroken **colt** of a donkey. They were to **untie it and bring it** to Jesus. Matthew included mention of the mother with her colt (see comments on Matt. 21:2). **If anyone** challenged them they were to say, **The Lord needs it and will send it back here** (to the village) **shortly** (*euthys*, “without delay”; cf. Mark 1:10). It is generally assumed that Jesus here referred to Himself by the title “Lord” (*kyrios*; cf. 5:19) not to the colt's owner.

Mark 11:4–6. Mark recorded the disciples’ carrying out Jesus’ instructions (cf. vv. 2–3), demonstrating the detailed accuracy of His ²⁵ prediction. This highlighted the **untying** of the **colt**, which **Jesus** may have intended as a messianic sign (cf. Gen. 49:8–12). Had Jesus made prearranged plans with the colt’s owner, or did this event reflect His supernatural knowledge? A later parallel situation (cf. Mark 14:13–16) may support the first view, but the large amount of detail Mark included on securing the colt (11:2–6) convincingly favors the second view. Even so, the colt’s owner probably had had previous contact with Jesus. The amount of detail Mark recorded here implies an eyewitness report; possibly Peter was one of the two disciples sent on this errand (cf. *Introduction*).

Mark 11:7–8. The disciples put **their** outer **cloaks** on **the colt** as a makeshift saddle. **Jesus** mounted the previously unriden colt and began His ride into Jerusalem. **Many people** entered into the excitement of the moment and spontaneously paid Him tribute by spreading **their** outer **cloaks** before Him **on the** dusty **road** (cf. 2 Kings 9:12–13). **Others spread** green **branches** (*stibadas*, “leaves or leafy branches”) **cut** from surrounding **fields**. Palm branches are mentioned in John 12:13.

Mark 11:9–10. The chiasmic (*a-b-b'-a'*) arrangement of these verses suggests antiphonal chanting by two groups—**those who went ahead** of Jesus **and those who followed** Him. They chanted Psalm 118:25–26. At the annual Passover festival (cf. Mark 14:1), the Jews chanted the six “ascent” psalms (Pss. 113–118) to express thanksgiving, praise, and petitions to God.

²⁵ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 155–156). Victor Books.

Hosanna, a transliteration of the Greek word which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew *hôšî 'âh nâ'*, originally was a prayer addressed to God, meaning “O save us now” (cf. Ps. 118:25a). Later it came to be used as a shout of praise (like “Hallelujah!”) and then as an enthusiastic welcome to pilgrims or to a famous Rabbi. **Hosanna in the highest**, in highest places, likely means “Save us, O God, who lives in heaven.” Its use here probably reflects a mixture of all these elements due to the nature of the crowd.

The acclamation, **Blessed** (lit., “May ... be blessed”) calls for God’s gracious power to attend someone or to effect something. **He who comes in the name of the Lord** (as God’s representative and with His authority) originally referred to a pilgrim coming to the festival. Though these words are not a messianic title, this crowd of pilgrims applied them to Jesus, perhaps with messianic overtones (cf. Gen. 49:10; Matt. 3:11) but they stopped short of identifying Jesus as the Messiah.

The coming kingdom (cf. comments on Mark 1:15) in association with **David** reflected the peoples’ messianic hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16; Amos 9:11–12). But their enthusiasm was for a ruling Messiah and a political kingdom, not realizing and not accepting the fact that the One peaceably riding on the colt was their Messiah (cf. Zech. 9:9), the suffering Messiah whose kingdom stood near because of His presence with them. For most people, then, this moment of jubilation was simply part of the traditional Passover celebration—it did not alarm the Roman authorities or initiate a call for Jesus’ arrest by the Jewish rulers.

Mark 11:11. After entering **Jerusalem Jesus ... went to the temple** (*hieron*, “the temple precincts”; cf. vv. 15, 27), not the central sanctuary (*naos*; cf. 14:58; 15:29, 38). **He** carefully surveyed the premises to see if they were being used as God intended. This led to His action the next day (cf. 11:15–17). **Since it was** near sunset when the city gates were closed, Jesus **went out to Bethany** (cf. v. 1a) **with the Twelve** for the night.

B. Jesus’ prophetic signs of God’s judgment on Israel (11:12–26)

This section has a “sandwich” structure (cf. 3:20–35; 5:21–43; 6:7–31). The account of Jesus’ judgment on the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–26) is divided by the account of His cleansing the temple precincts (vv. 15–19). This structure suggests that each episode helps explain the other. Like the fig tree, Israel flourished with the “leaves” of ritual religion but lacked the “fruit” of righteousness God demanded. Both episodes signify God’s impending judgment on Israel for religious hypocrisy (cf. comments on 7:6). Matthew telescoped the incidents into two separate, successive accounts without the precise time intervals Mark noted (Matt. 21:12–17, 18–22).

1. Jesus’ judgment on the unproductive fig tree (11:12–14) (Matt. 21:18–19).

Mark 11:12–13. **Next day**, early Monday morning, after **leaving Bethany** for Jerusalem (cf. v. 1a) **Jesus was** (lit., “became”) **hungry**. From a **distance** Jesus saw a wayside **fig tree in leaf**, with full green foliage, and **went to see if it had any fruit**. But it had **nothing but leaves**. Mark explained that **it was not the season for figs**.

The time of year was Passover (cf. 14:1), the middle of the month of Nisan (April). In Palestine fig trees produced crops of small edible buds in March followed by the

appearance of large green leaves in early April. This early green “fruit” (buds) was common food for local peasants. (An absence of these buds despite the tree’s green foliage promising their presence indicated it would bear no ²⁶ fruit that year.) Eventually these buds dropped off when the normal crop of figs formed and ripened in late May and June, the fig season. Thus it was reasonable for Jesus shortly before Passover (mid-April) to expect to find something edible on that fig tree even though it was not the season for figs.

Mark 11:14. Jesus’ strong denunciation of the tree, which Peter later regarded as a curse (v. 21), was a dramatic prophetic sign of God’s impending judgment on Israel, not an angry reaction because Jesus was hungry and found no food. *The promising but unproductive fig tree symbolized Israel’s spiritual barrenness despite divine favor and the impressive outward appearance of their religion* (cf. Jer. 8:13; Hosea 9:10, 16; Micah 7:1). This is aptly illustrated in Mark 11:27–12:40.

2. Jesus’ Judgment on the Misuse of the Temple (11:15–19) (Matt. 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–46).

This event is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels. John recorded an earlier cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (cf. comments on John 2:13–22).

Mark 11:15–16. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He went into the temple area (*hieron*; cf. v. 11), the large outer court of the Gentiles surrounding the inner sacred

²⁶ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 156–157). Victor Books.

courts of the temple itself. (See the sketch of the temple.) No Gentile was allowed beyond this outer court. In it the high priest Caiaphas had authorized a market (probably a recent economic innovation) for the sale of ritually pure items necessary for temple sacrifice: wine, oil, salt, approved sacrificial animals and birds. Money from three sources circulated in Palestine in New Testament times: imperial money (Roman), provincial money (Greek), and local money (Jewish). Money changers provided the required Tyrian (Jewish) coinage for the annual half-shekel temple tax (Ex. 30:12–16) required of all male Jews 20 years of age and up. This was in exchange for their Greek and Roman currency, which featured human portraits considered idolatrous. Though a small surcharge was permitted in these transactions, dealings were not free from extortion and fraud.

In addition (according to Mark 11:16) people loaded with **merchandise** were taking shortcuts **through** this area, making it a thoroughfare from one part of the city to another. Jesus was outraged by this blatant disregard for the temple area specifically set apart for Gentile use. So He **overturned the** money changers' **tables** and **the** dove-sellers²⁷ dove-sellers' **benches**, and **would not allow** people to use the area as a thoroughfare. Other certified markets were available elsewhere in the city.

Mark 11:17. Jesus' daring action captured peoples' attention and **He taught** (lit., "began teaching") **them** about God's purpose for the temple. Using a question expecting a positive answer, He appealed to Old Testament authority for His action (quoting Isa. 56:7b verbatim from the LXX).

²⁷ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 157–158). Victor Books.

Only Mark extended the quotation from Isaiah to include the words for all nations.

God desired that both Gentiles and Jews use the temple as a place of worship (cf. John 12:20). This was especially relevant to Mark's readers in Rome. By contrast **you** (emphatic), the insensitive Jews, **have made it**, the court of the Gentiles, **a den of robbers**. It was a refuge for fraudulent traders (cf. Jer. 7:11) instead of **a house of prayer** (cf. 1 Kings 8:28–30; Isa. 60:7) for both Jews and Gentiles. *By this action Jesus as the Messiah claimed greater authority over the temple than that of the high priest* (cf. Hosea 9:15; Mal. 3:1–5).

Mark 11:18–19. When the religious leaders (cf. comments on 8:31; 11:27; 14:1, 43, 53) **heard** about **this**, they **began** seeking (cf. 12:12; 14:1, 11) the best **way to kill Him** without creating a major uprising. **Mark alone explained (*gar*, for) that they were afraid of Him because of His authoritative appeal to the crowds.** **The whole crowd** of Passover pilgrims from all parts of the ancient world **was amazed** (*exoplēsseto*, “astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed”; cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 10:26) **at** the content of **His teaching** (cf. 1:27). His popularity with the people kept the Jewish authorities from arresting Him immediately. That **evening** (Monday) **they**, Jesus and the Twelve, left Jerusalem and presumably went to Bethany (cf. 11:11).

3. The Withered Fig Tree and a Lesson on Faith and Prayer (11:20–26) (Matt. 21:20–22).

Mark 11:20–21. These verses form the sequel to verses 12–14. Next **morning**, Tuesday, **as** Jesus and His disciples were returning to Jerusalem, **they saw the same fig tree** (v. 13) but it was **withered from the roots**, completely dried up, fulfilling Jesus' words (v. 14). Addressing **Jesus** as **Rabbi** (cf. 9:5), **Peter** spoke of the tree's

condition with great surprise probably because the tree's total destruction was much more severe than Jesus' words the previous day (11:14) indicated. Though Jesus did not explain the meaning of the event, many believe that it was a vivid picture of God's impending judgment on Israel (cf. comments on vv. 12–14).

Mark 11:22–24. Jesus exhorted the disciples, **Have faith in God**. Faith that rests in God is unwavering trust in His omnipotent power and unfailing goodness (cf. 5:34). Following a solemn introduction (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28), Jesus said in a hyperbole that whoever **says to this mountain**, the Mount of Olives representing an immovable obstacle, **Go, throw yourself** (lit., “be uprooted” and “be thrown”) **into the sea** (the Dead Sea, visible from the Mount of Olives), **it will be done for him** by God. The one condition is, negatively, absence of **doubt** and positively, belief, unwavering trust in God, that the petition will be granted. **Such faith contrasted with Israel's lack of faith. Therefore, because believing prayer taps God's power to accomplish the humanly impossible (cf. 10:27), Jesus exhorted His disciples to believe that they have already received whatever they request in prayer.** Faith accepts it as good as done even though the actual answer is still future.

Jesus made this promise on the recognized premise that petitions must be in harmony with God's will (cf. 14:36; Matt. 6:9–10; John 14:13–14; 15:7; 16:23–24; 1 John 5:14–15). This enables faith to receive the answers God gives. God is always ready to respond to obedient believers' prayers, and they can petition Him knowing that no situation or difficulty is impossible for Him.

Mark 11:25–26. A forgiving attitude toward others as well as faith in God is also essential for effective prayer. When a believer stands to pray, a common prayer

posture among Jews (cf. 1 Sam. 1:26; Luke 18:11, 13), and **if** he has **anything against anyone**, a grudge against an offending believer or nonbeliever, he is to **forgive** that one of the offense.

This is to be done in order that his **Father in heaven** (the only Marcan occurrence of this phrase, but frequent in Matt.) **may** “also” (*kai* in Gr.) **forgive** him his **sins** (lit., *paraptōmata*, “trespasses,” only occurrence in Mark), acts that sidestep or deviate from God’s truth. **Divine forgiveness toward a believer and a believer’s forgiveness toward others are inseparably linked because a bond has been established between the divine Forgiver and the forgiven believer** (cf. Matt. 18:21–35). One who has accepted God’s forgiveness is expected to forgive others just as God has forgiven him (Eph. 4:32). If he does not, he forfeits God’s forgiveness in his daily life.

C. Jesus’ Controversy with the Jewish Religious Leaders in the Temple Courts (11:27–12:44)

Mark likely packaged the five episodes in ²⁸ 11:27–12:37 around the theme of conflict between Jesus and various influential religious groups (similarly, cf. 2:1–3:5). A contrast between self-righteous religion and wholehearted devotion to God concludes the section (12:38–44). The temple area was the focal point of Jesus’ ministry during His final week (cf. 11:11, 15–17, 27; 12:35, 41; 13:1–3; 14:49). The controversies serve as a summary of Jesus’ teaching during Tuesday and Wednesday of that week. They depict the religious leaders’ growing hostility toward Him.

²⁸ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 158–159). Victor Books.

1. The Question Concerning Jesus' Authority (11:27–12:12)

Jesus' credentials were questioned by representatives of the Sanhedrin. His response placed them in an embarrassing dilemma (11:27–33) and His Vineyard Parable exposed their rejection of God's messengers (12:1–12).

a. Jesus' Counterquestion about John's Baptism (11:27–33).

Mark 11:27–28. On Tuesday morning (cf. v. 20) Jesus and His disciples entered **Jerusalem** again (cf. vv. 11–12, 15). **In the temple courts** (*heirō*; cf. vv. 11, 15) **Jesus** was confronted by representatives of the Sanhedrin (cf. comments on 8:31; 14:43, 53; 15:1).

As guardians of Israel's religious life, they asked two questions:

(1) What was the nature of His **authority** (cf. 1:22, 27); what were His credentials?

(2) Who was the source of His **authority**? Who authorized Him **to do this**? “

This” (lit., **these things**) refers to His purging the temple the previous day (cf. 11:15–17) and probably more generally to all His authoritative words and deeds which drew much popular acclaim (cf. v. 18; 12:12, 37). Their questions indicate that Jesus had not openly stated that He is the Messiah, a significant point in view of Mark's “secrecy motif” (cf. comments on 1:43–45; 12:1, 12).

Mark 11:29–30. Jesus' counterquestions, a common Rabbinic debating technique (cf. 10:2–3), made His answer to them depend on their answer to Him. It focused the issue: Was **John's baptism** and his whole ministry (cf. 1:4–8; 6:14–16, 20) **from heaven** (of divine origin; cf. 8:11), **or from men?** (of human origin) Jesus implied that His own authority came from the same source as John's which indicates there was

no rivalry between them. The leaders' conclusion about John would reveal their conclusion about Him.

Mark 11:31–32. Jesus' question placed these religious leaders in a dilemma. **If** they answered, **From heaven**, they would incriminate themselves for not believing John and supporting his ministry (cf. John 1:19–27). They would stand self-condemned for rejecting God's messenger. They would also be forced to acknowledge that Jesus' authority came from God (cf. Mark 9:37b). This answer, though true, was unacceptable because of their unbelief.

But if they answered, **From men** (lit., "But shall we say, 'From men'?"), the implications were obvious: they would deny that John was commissioned by God and discredit themselves before the people. Mark explained, **They feared the people** (cf. 12:12) because **everyone** regarded **John** as a genuine **prophet**, God's spokesman (cf. Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18. 5. 2). The people viewed Jesus this way too (cf. Matt. 21:46). This latter answer, though false, was the one they preferred but found unacceptable because of the people.

Mark 11:33. Since neither option was acceptable they pleaded ignorance in an attempt to save face. So **Jesus** was not obligated to answer their question. His question (cf. v. 30) implied that His **authority**, like John's, was from God. By suspending judgment, these religious leaders showed that they really rejected John and Jesus as God's messengers. Throughout their history most leaders of Israel repeatedly rejected God's messengers, a point Jesus made in the following parable (12:1–12).

b. Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard Owner's Son (12:1–12)
(Matt. 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19)

This parable reflects the social situation of first-century Palestine, especially Galilee. Wealthy foreign landlords owned large land estates which they leased to tenant farmers. The tenants agreed to cultivate the land and care for the vineyards when the landlords were away. A contract between them designated that a portion of the crop was to be paid as rent. At harvesttime the owners sent agents to collect the rent. Inevitably tension arose between the absentee owners and the tenants.

Mark 12:1a. This brief summary statement (cf. introduction to 2:1–2) introduces the single parable (cf. introduction to 4:1–2) Mark recorded here. Jesus addressed it **to them**, the Sanhedrin interrogators who were plotting against Him (cf. 11:27; 12:12). It exposed their hostile intentions and warned them of the consequences.

Mark 12:1b. The details of the vineyard's construction are derived from Isaiah 5:1–2 (part of a prophecy of God's judgment on Israel), as the vineyard is a familiar symbol for the nation of Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8–19). **A man**, a landlord (cf. Mark 12:9), **planted a vineyard**, analogous to God's relationship to Israel. The **wall** for protection, **a pit** beneath **the winepress** to gather the juice of the pressed grapes, and **a watchtower** for shelter, storage, and security, show the owner's desire to make this a choice vineyard. **Then he** leased it **to tenant farmers**, vinegrowers, representing Israel's religious leaders, **and went away on a journey** probably to live abroad. He was an absentee owner.

Mark 12:2–5. The owner sent three servants—agents representing God's servants (the prophets) to Israel—**to the** tenant farmers to receive a share **of the fruit** as rent

at harvesttime (lit., “at the right time,” i.e., the vintage season of the fifth year; cf. Lev. 19:23–25). **But** the tenant farmers behaved violently. **They seized** the first **servant ... beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. They** seriously wounded the second **servant** and insulted him. **They killed** the third **servant**. The long-suffering owner also **sent many others, some of** whom were beaten and **others ... killed**. Time and again God had sent prophets to Israel to gather fruits of repentance and righteousness (cf. Luke 3:8) but His prophets were abused, wounded, and killed (cf. Jer. 7:25–26; 25:4–7; Matt. 23:33–39).

Mark 12:6–8. The owner still **had one messenger to send, a son, whom he loved** (lit., “a beloved son”—a designation representing God’s Son, Jesus; cf. 1:11; 9:7). **Last of all**, a phrase unique to Mark, **he sent his son**, expecting the tenant farmers to give *him* the honor denied his servants. The son’s arrival may have caused **the tenants** to assume that the owner had died and **this** son was his only **heir**. In Palestine at the time, a piece of land could be possessed lawfully by whoever claimed it first if it was “ownerless property,” unclaimed by an heir ²⁹ within a certain time period (cf. Mishnah *Baba Bathra* 3. 3). The tenant farmers assumed that if they killed the son they could acquire the vineyard.

So they conspired together **and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard**. Some say this predicts what would happen to Jesus: He would be crucified outside of Jerusalem, expelled from Israel in a climactic expression of the leaders’ rejection of Him. But this presses the parable’s details too far here. It is better to see the

²⁹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 160). Victor Books.

throwing of the son's dead body over the wall without burial as a climax to their wicked indignities. Mark's emphasis of their rejection and murder of the son took place *within* the vineyard, that is, within Israel.

Mark 12:9. Jesus' rhetorical question invited His audience to share in deciding what action **the owner** should take. He affirmed his listeners' answer (cf. Matt. 21:41) by alluding to Isaiah 5:1–7 again. This was a strong appeal for those plotting His death to consider the serious consequences of their actions. He saw Himself as the “only Son” sent by God (John 3:16). The rejection of the owner's son was really a rejection of the owner who would **come** with governmental authority **and kill** the murderous **tenants and give the vineyard to others**. Likewise the Jewish leaders' rejection of John the Baptist and of Jesus, God's final Messenger, was a rejection of God Himself. This would inevitably bring His judgment on Israel and would transfer their privileges to others temporarily (cf. Rom. 11:25, 31).

Mark 12:10–11. Jesus sharpened the application of the parable to Himself as the Son and extended its teaching by quoting verbatim Psalm 118:22–23 (Ps. 117 in the LXX), a familiar text recognized as messianic elsewhere (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4–8). The figure changed from the son/ tenants of the parable to the stone/ builders of the psalm, making possible a parabolic allusion to Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. A slain son cannot be revived but a rejected stone can be retrieved and used.

The quotation begins where the parable ended. **The stone** (Jesus, like the son), which **the builders** (the Jewish religious leaders, like the tenant farmers) **rejected has become the capstone** (“cornerstone,” niv marg.; lit., “head of the corner”). This was considered the most important stone of a building. This dramatic reversal of the

builders' decision and exaltation of the rejected stone was God's sovereign doing, a remarkable thing. God overrules in amazing ways rebellious human attempts to block His purposes.

Mark 12:12. They, the Sanhedrin representatives (11:27), were seeking (cf. 11:18) to **arrest Him because they** realized Jesus **had** addressed **the parable against them** ("with reference to" or directed "toward" them). **But** fearing **the** excitable Passover **crowd, they left Him alone and** departed. The fact that Jesus' adversaries understood this parable is a new development (cf. 4:11–12), suggesting that at Jesus' initiative the "secret" of His true identity would soon be openly declared (cf. comments on 1:43–45; 14:62).

2. The Question Concerning the Poll Tax (12:13–17) (Matt. 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26).

Mark 12:13. Despite Jesus' warning to His Sanhedrin adversaries in the preceding parable, **they** continued their campaign against Him by sending **some ... Pharisees** (cf. 2:16) **and Herodians** (cf. 3:6) **to catch Him in His words** (lit., "by means of a word," i.e., an unguarded statement they could use against Him; cf. 10:2). The word translated "catch" (*argeusōsin*, found only here in the NT) was used to describe catching wild animals with a trap. **Later** (niv), though implied, is not in the Greek text; no time reference is given.

Mark 12:14–15a. Addressing Jesus as **Teacher** (cf. 4:38; 9:5), they used carefully chosen remarks designed to hide their true motives and to prevent Jesus from evading their difficult question. They acknowledged He was honest and impartial, courting no one's favor, **because** He paid **no attention to who they are** (lit., "You do

not look at the face of men,” a Heb. expression; cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). Then they asked, **Is it right**, legally permitted by God’s Law (cf. Deut. 17:14–15), **to pay taxes to Caesar**, the Roman emperor, **or not? Should we pay** (*dōmen*, “Shall we give”) **or shouldn’t we?**

“Taxes” (*kēnson*) was a Latin loanword meaning “census.” It referred to the annual poll tax (head tax) demanded by the Roman emperor from all Jews since a.d. 6, when Judea became a Roman province (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 5. 1. 21). The money went directly into the emperor’s treasury. This tax was unpopular because it typified the Jews’ subjugation to Rome (cf. Acts 5:37).

The Pharisees objected to the tax, but expediently justified its payment. They were concerned about the *religious* implications of their question. The Herodians supported foreign rule through the Herods and favored the tax. They were concerned about the *political* implications of their question. Obviously the question was designed to place Jesus in a religious and political dilemma. A yes answer would antagonize the people and discredit Him as God’s Spokesman. No messianic claimant could sanction willing submission to pagan rulers. A no answer would invite retaliation from Rome.

Mark 12:15b–16. Jesus immediately detected **their hypocrisy**, the malicious intent beneath their pretense of an honest inquiry. He exposed it with a rhetorical question about **why** they were **trying to trap** (*peirazete*, “test”; cf. 10:2) Him. Then **He asked** them to **bring** Him a **denarius** (cf. 6:37) so He might **look at it**, to use it as a visual aid. **The** common Roman denarius, a small silver **coin**, was the only coin acceptable for imperial tax payments.

When Jesus **asked them** to tell Him **whose portrait** and **inscription** were on it, they replied, **Caesar's**. The portrait (*eikōn*, “image”) was probably that of Tiberius Caesar (reigned a.d. 14–37; see the list of Roman emperors at Luke 3:1) and the inscription read in Latin: “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus” and on the reverse side: “Chief Priest.” This inscription originated in the imperial cult of emperor worship and was a claim to divinity, which was particularly repulsive to Jews.

Mark 12:17. But to use Caesar's coinage was to acknowledge his authority and the benefits of the civil government it represented and consequently the obligation to pay taxes. So Jesus declared, **Give** (*apodote*, “give back”; cf. v. 14) **to Caesar what is Caesar's** (lit., “the things belonging to Caesar”). This tax was a debt they owed to Caesar for use of his money and the other benefits of his rule. Jesus had made His point but significantly He added, **and give back to God what is God's** (lit., “the things belonging to God”). This could refer to “paying” God the temple tax due Him (cf. Matt. 17:24–27), but Jesus ³⁰ probably meant it as a protest against the emperor's claim to deity. Indeed the emperor must receive his due, but not more than that; he must not receive the divine honor and worship he claimed. Those are due only to God. *People are “God's coinage” because they bear His image (cf. Gen. 1:27) and they owe Him what belongs to Him, their allegiance.* **This, not the poll tax, was the crucial issue to Jesus.** His questioners continued to be greatly **amazed** (*exethaumazon*, imperf. tense of a strong compound verb found only here in the NT) **at Him**. This incident was especially relevant to Mark's Roman readers for it indicated that Christianity did not foster disloyalty to the state.

³⁰ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 162). Victor Books.

3. The Question Concerning the Resurrection (12:18–27) (Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40).

Mark 12:18. The Sadducees ... came to Jesus with a question in another attempt to discredit Him (cf. 11:27; 12:13). It is generally believed that they were the Jewish aristocratic party whose members came largely from the priesthood and the upper classes. Though less numerous and popular than the Pharisees, they occupied influential positions on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court and generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. They denied the truths of the **resurrection**, future judgment, and the existence of angels and spirits (cf. Acts 23:6–8). They accepted only the Books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative and rejected the oral traditions observed as binding by the Pharisees. This is Mark's only reference to the Sadducees.

Mark 12:19–23. After formally addressing Jesus as **Teacher** (cf. v. 14), they gave a free rendering of the Mosaic regulation concerning levirate (from Latin, *levir*, "husband's brother") marriage (cf. Deut. 25:5–10). If a husband died without leaving a male heir his (unmarried) **brother** (or, if none, his nearest male relative) was to **marry** his **widow**. The first son of that union was given the name of the dead **brother** and was considered **his** child. This was to prevent extinction of a family line and thereby kept the family inheritance intact.

The Sadducees *made up a story about seven brothers who successively fulfilled the duty of levirate marriage to their first brother's wife* but *all seven died childless*. Then **the woman died** also. They asked Jesus, **At the resurrection whose wife will she be?** Clearly, they were ridiculing belief in the resurrection.

Mark 12:24. Using a two-pronged counterquestion expecting a positive answer in Greek, **Jesus** cited two reasons why they were **in error** (*planasthe*, “you are deceiving yourselves”; cf. v. 27): (a) they did **not know the Scriptures**—their true meaning, not merely their contents; and (b) they did not know **the power of God**—His power to overcome death and give life. Then Jesus amplified each reason starting with the second (v. 25) and then the first (vv. 26–27).

Mark 12:25. The Sadducees *wrongly assumed that marriages would be resumed after the resurrection*. In resurrection-life people **will neither marry** (contract a marriage) **nor be given in marriage** (have a marriage arranged by parents). Rather, **like the angels in heaven** they will be immortal beings in God’s presence.

Marriage is necessary and suitable for the present world order, in which death prevails, in order to continue the human race. But angels, whose existence the Sadducees denied (cf. Acts 23:8), are deathless and live in a different order of existence where they have no need for marital relations or reproduction of offspring. Their lives center totally around fellowship with God. So it will be in the afterlife for human beings rightly related to God. **The Sadducees did not grasp that God will establish a whole new order of life** after death and resolve all apparent difficulties connected with it. In short, their question was irrelevant.

Mark 12:26–27. The Sadducees wrongly alleged that the idea of a resurrection was absent from the Pentateuch. But Jesus, using a question expecting a positive answer, appealed to **the Book of Moses**, the Pentateuch, and spoke of **the burning bush** (Ex. 3:1–6).

In this passage God identified Himself to Moses, affirming, **I am the God of Abraham ... Isaac, and ... Jacob** (Ex. 3:6). God implied that the patriarchs were still alive and that He had a continuing relationship with them as their covenant-keeping God, even though they had died long before. This demonstrates, Jesus concluded, that **He is not the God of the dead**, in the Sadducean understanding of death as extinction, **but of the living**. He is still the patriarchs' God which would not be true had they ceased to exist at death, that is, if death ends it all. And His covenant faithfulness implicitly guarantees their bodily resurrection.

Jesus' answer clearly affirmed the fact of life after death. Apparently, He assumed that this was enough to prove that the resurrection of the body will occur as well. In Hebrew thought people are regarded as a unity of the material (body) and immaterial (soul/spirit). One is incomplete without the other (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1–8). Thus authentic human existence in the eternal order of life demands the union of soul/spirit with the body (cf. Phil. 3:21). Both bodily resurrection and life after death depend on the faithfulness of “the God of the living.” Jesus' final remark, recorded only by Mark, emphasized how seriously **mistaken** (*planasthe*, “you are deceiving yourselves”; cf. Mark 12:24) they were to deny the resurrection and life after death.

4. The Question Concerning the Greatest Commandment (12:28–34) (Matt. 22:34–40).

Mark 12:28. One of the Law teachers (cf. 1:22), had **heard** Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees (12:18–27) and was impressed with His **good answer to them**. This suggested he was probably a Pharisee. He came with no apparent hostile or hidden motive to appraise Jesus' skill in answering a much-debated subject in scribal circles. Traditionally the scribes spoke of 613 individual commandments of the Mosaic

Law—365 negative ones and 248 positive ones. While they believed all were binding, they assumed a distinction between weightier and lighter statutes and often attempted to sum up the whole Law in a single unifying command. In light of this debate, this Law teacher asked Jesus, Which (*poia*, “what kind of”) commandment is the most important (*prōtē*, “first”) of them all?

Mark 12:29–31. Jesus’ reply went beyond the debated lighter/weightier classifications to a statement of **the most important** command and its inseparable companion, which together summarize the whole Law. He began with the opening words of the *Shema* (from Heb., “Hear!” [*šema*], the first word of Deut. 6:4). This creed (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) was recited twice daily—morning and evening—by devout Jews. It asserted the basis of Jewish faith: **The Lord** (Heb., *Yahweh*), namely, **our God**, Israel’s covenant-keeping God, **the Lord is One**, that is, unique (cf. Mark 12:32).

The command, **Love** (lit., “you shall love”) **the Lord your God** (Deut. 6:5), calls for a volitional commitment to God that is personal, comprehensive, and wholehearted.

This is emphasized by the repeated words **with** (*ex*, “out of,” denoting source), **all** (*holēs*, “the whole of”), **your** (sing.), and the various terms relating to the human personality—**heart** (control center; cf. Mark 7:19), **soul** (self-conscious life; cf. 8:35–36), **mind** (thought capacity), and **strength** (bodily powers). The Hebrew text does not mention “mind”; the Septuagint omits “heart”; but Jesus included both terms, stressing the comprehensive nature of the command (cf. 12:33; Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27).

Jesus then spoke of a similar commitment to one's neighbor by quoting a **second inseparable (cf. 1 John 4:19–21) and complementary command. Love** (lit., “you shall love”) **your neighbor** (*plēsion*, “one who is nearby,” a generic term for fellowman) **as**, in the same way as, **yourself** (Lev. 19:18). The love a person has naturally for himself is not to focus solely on himself—a constant tendency—but should be directed equally toward others. **No** (Gr., “no other”) **commandment is greater than these two** because wholehearted love to God and one's neighbor is the sum and substance of the Law and the Prophets (cf. Matt. 22:40). To fulfill these commands is to fulfill all others.

Mark 12:32–34a. These verses are unique to Mark. Apparently they instructed his readers who struggled with the relationship between spiritual reality and ceremonial ritual (cf. comments on 7:19). The scribe (cf. 12:28) recognized the accuracy of Jesus' answer and voiced his approval, viewing Him as an excellent **Teacher** (cf. vv. 14, 19). He restated Jesus' answer, carefully avoiding mention of **God** (not in the Gr. text but supplied in the niv) in keeping with the typical Jewish practice of avoiding unnecessary use of the divine name out of great respect for it. The words, **There is no other but Him**, come from Deuteronomy 4:35. He also substituted the word **understanding** for “soul” and “mind” (cf. Mark 12:30).

He made the bold statement that the double command of love **is much more important than all burnt offerings** (fully consumed sacrifices) **and sacrifices** (those partly consumed and partly eaten by worshipers; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3; Jer. 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8). **He had** responded **wisely**, and **Jesus** probably stimulated further thought by declaring, **You are not far** (“not far” is emphatic in Gr.) **from the kingdom of God** (cf. Mark 1:15; 4:11; 10:15, 23). This man had the kind of

spiritual understanding (cf. 10:15) and openness to Jesus that brought him near to embracing God's kingdom, His spiritual rule over those related to Him by faith.

Whether he entered this relationship is not known.

Mark 12:34b. Jesus had effectively thwarted all attempts to discredit Him and had exposed the hostile motives and errors of His opponents so skillfully that nobody else **dared ask Him any more questions.**

5. Jesus' Question Concerning Messiah's Sonship (12:35–37) (Matt. 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44).

Mark 12:35. Later while **teaching in the temple courts** (*tō hierō*; cf. 11:11), Jesus asked what **the Law teachers** meant when they said **that the Christ**, the expected Messiah, is ("simply" is implied) **the Son** (Descendant) **of David**, who would be the triumphant Deliverer (cf. 10:47). The Davidic sonship of the Messiah was a standard³¹ Jewish belief (cf. John 7:41–42) firmly based on the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8–16; Ps. 89:3–4; Isa. 9:2–7; 11:1–9; Jer. 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15–17, 22; Ezek. 34:23–24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11). Jesus added that it is equally true that the Messiah is David's Lord. The Law teachers' view was correct but incomplete (cf. similarly, Mark 9:11–13). The scriptural view held far more than just their narrow nationalistic hopes.

Mark 12:36–37a. To prove that the Messiah is David's Lord, Jesus quoted what **David himself speaking by (under the controlling influence of) the Holy Spirit declared in Psalm 110:1.** This clearly argues for both the Davidic authorship and the divine

³¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 164). Victor Books.

inspiration of this psalm. He said: **The Lord** (Heb., *Yahweh*, God the Father; cf. Mark 12:29) **said to my** (David's) **Lord** (Heb., *Ādōnāy*, the Messiah): **Sit at My** (the Father's) **right hand**, the place of highest honor and authority, **until** (or "while"; cf. 9:1; 14:32) **I** (the Father) **put Your** (the Messiah's) **enemies under Your** (the Messiah's) **feet**, bringing about their subjugation (cf. Josh. 10:24; Heb. 10:12–14).

The unassailable fact was that **David** called the Messiah **Lord**. This raised a problem:

How then, or in what sense, **can** (*estin*, "is") **He** (the Messiah, David's Lord) **be his** (David's) **Son**? Jesus' rhetorical question pointed His listeners to the only valid answer: the Messiah is David's Son *and* David's Lord at the same time. This strongly implies that the Messiah is both God (David's Lord) and man (David's Son; cf. Rom. 1:3–4; 2 Tim. 2:8). He will restore the future Davidic kingdom on earth (2 Sam. 7:16; Amos 9:11–12; Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:31–33).

No doubt Jesus deliberately raised this issue so that His listeners might relate it to **Him**. It carried a bold yet veiled reference to His true identity which the Jewish leaders probably caught but did not accept (cf. comments on Mark 12:12; 14:61–62). (Interestingly the NT has ³² more references and allusions to Ps. 110 than to any other single OT passage [cf., e.g., Acts 2:29–35; Heb. 1:5–13; 5:6; 7:17, 21].)

Mark 12:37b. In contrast with the Jewish leaders who had been trying to trap Jesus with subtle questions (cf. v. 13), **the large** Passover **crowd** was listening all along to His teaching **with delight**, though not necessarily with comprehension.

³² Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 164–165). Victor Books.

6. Conclusion: Jesus' Condemnation of Hypocrisy and Commendation of True Commitment (12:38–44)

Jesus' denunciation of the Law teachers' conduct (vv. 38–40) concludes Mark's account of His public ministry and signals Jesus' final break with the Jewish religious authorities. This contrasts sharply with His recognition of a widow's genuine devotion to God (vv. 41–44) which resumes His teaching to His disciples (cf. v. 43) and forms a transition to His prophetic discourse (chap. 13).

a. Jesus' Condemnation of Hypocrisy (12:38–40) (Matt. 23:1–39; Luke 20:45–47).

Mark 12:38–39. Jesus kept warning people to **Watch out** (cf. 8:15) for those (implied in the Gr. construction) Law **teachers** who sought praise from men and abused their privileges. Many but not all Law teachers acted this way (cf. 12:28–34).

They liked to (a) go **around in flowing robes**, long white linen garments with fringes worn by priests, Law teachers, and Levites; (b) **be greeted in the marketplaces** with formal titles—Rabbi (teacher), master, father (cf. Matt. 23:7; Luke 20:46)—by the common people who respected them highly; (c) **have the most important synagogue seats**, those reserved for dignitaries, situated in front of the chest containing the sacred scrolls of Scripture and facing the whole congregation; **and** (d) have **the places of honor at banquets**, special evening meals at which they were seated next to the host and received preferential treatment.

Mark 12:40. Since first-century Law teachers got no pay for their services (Mishnah *Aboth* 1. 13; *Bekhoroth* 4. 6) they depended on the hospitality extended to them by many devout Jews. Unfortunately there were abuses. The charge, **they devour**

widows' houses, was a vivid figure of speech for exploiting the generosity of people of limited means, especially widows. They unethically appropriated people's property. In addition, they made **lengthy prayers** in order to impress people with their piety and gain their confidence.

Jesus condemned their ostentatious conduct, greed, and hypocrisy. Instead of pointing people's attention to God they claimed it for themselves under the pretense of piety. Teachers such as these **will be punished most severely** (lit., "will receive greater condemnation"; James 3:1) at God's final judgment.

***b. Jesus' Commendation of a Widow's Commitment to God (12:41–44)
(Luke 21:1–4).***

Mark 12:41–42. From the court of the Gentiles (cf. 11:15) where He conducted His public teaching, **Jesus** entered the court of the women. Against the wall of this court were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers' freewill **offerings** and contributions (Mishnah *Shekalim* 6. 5). From a vantage point **opposite** (*katenanti*; cf. comments on 11:2) one of these receptacles Jesus was observing how (*pōs*, "in what way") the Passover **crowd** was **putting their money into the temple treasury** (lit., "the receptacle").

In contrast with **many wealthy people who gave large amounts** (lit., "many coins" of all kinds—gold, silver, copper, and bronze), **one unnamed poor widow gave two** *lepta* (Gr.). *A lepton was the smallest bronze Jewish coin in circulation in Palestine.* Two *lepta* were worth 1/64 of a Roman denarius, a day's wage for a laborer (cf. 6:37). For his Roman readers Mark stated their value in terms of Roman coinage, namely, **a fraction of a penny.**

Mark 12:43–44. With solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) **Jesus said** that she had given **more ... than all the others**. The reason was (*gar*, “for, because”) the others **gave out of their material wealth** at little cost to them, **but** the widow **out of her poverty** gave **everything**. Proportionally she had given the most—**all she had to live on**. In giving to God sacrificially she completely entrusted herself to Him to provide her needs. **She could have kept back one coin for herself**. A Rabbinic rule stating that an offering of less than two *lepta* was not acceptable related to charitable gifts and does not apply here. Jesus used her example to teach His disciples the value God places on wholehearted commitment. Their own commitment to Jesus would soon be severely tested (cf. 14:27–31). *This incident also illustrates Jesus’ total self-giving in death.*³³

D. Jesus’ Prophetic Olivet Discourse to His disciples (chap. 13) (Matt. 24:1–25:46; Luke 21:5–36)

This chapter, known as the *Olivet Discourse as Jesus gave it on the Mount of Olives*, is the longest unit of His teaching recorded by Mark (cf. Mark 4:1–34). Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (13:2) which prompted the disciples to inquire about the timing of “these things” (v. 4). Apparently, **they associated the destruction of the temple with the end of the Age** (cf. Matt. 24:3).

In reply Jesus skillfully wove together into a unified discourse a prophetic scene involving two perspectives: **(a)** the near event, the destruction of Jerusalem (a.d. 70); and **(b)** the far event, the coming of the Son of Man in clouds with power and glory.

³³ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 166). Victor Books.

The former local event was a forerunner of the latter universal event. *In this way Jesus followed the precedent of Old Testament prophets by predicting a far future event in terms of a near future event whose fulfillment at least some of His hearers would see* (cf. Mark 9:1, 12–13). This indicates Jesus anticipated a period of historical development between His resurrection and His second coming (cf. 13:10; 14:9).

Nearly two millennia have passed since the fall of Jerusalem, and the end has not yet come.

This prophetic information was set within a framework of (a) warnings against deception and (b) exhortations to vigilant obedience during the intervening time of missionary outreach, persecution, and socio-political upheavals. There are 19 imperatives in 13:5–37, and in each case the hortatory element (second person verbs: vv. 5b, 7a, 9a, et al.) arises out of Jesus' instruction about the future (third person indicative verbs: vv. 6, 7b–8, 9b–10, et al.). The verb "be on guard" (blepetete) occurs four times *at significant points throughout the discourse* (vv. 5 ["Watch out," NIV], 9, 23, 33). This was to encourage His followers to maintain steadfast faith and obedience to God throughout the present Age.

In Mark's narrative, *the Olivet Discourse is a bridge between Jesus' controversies with the religious authorities* (11:27–12:44) *and the Passion narrative* (14:1–15:47) *which culminated in His arrest and death*. It disclosed to His disciples that the religious establishment which opposed Him and would eventually condemn Him to death would itself fall under God's judgment.

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 166). Victor Books.