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## **Mark Questions Verse by Verse**

by Dr. Robert D. Luginbill

### **Introduction to Mark**

NIV SB: Although there is no direct internal evidence of authorship, it was the unanimous testimony of the early church that this Gospel was written by John Mark ("John, also called Mark," Ac 12:12, 25; 15:37). The most important evidence comes from Papias (c. AD 140), who quotes an even earlier source as saying: (1) Mark was a close associate of Peter, from whom he received the tradition of the things said and done by the Lord (see 1Pe 5:13 and note); (2) this tradition did not come to Mark as a finished, sequential account of the life of our Lord, but as the preaching of Peter-preaching directed to the needs of the early Christian communities; (3) Mark accurately preserved this material. The conclusion drawn from this tradition is that the Gospel of Mark largely consists of the preaching of Peter arranged and shaped by Mark (see note on Ac 10:37).

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**Q:** What is your take on the authorship of the gospel?  
How do we know that Mark is the author? Do you agree with the conclusions drawn from Papias?

**A:** Evidence for this sort of thing comes from two sources: 1) historians (such as Eusebius who preserves fragments of Papias) and 2) tradition. We don't have a lot of details, and this introduction is pretty good at summing up what is out there. The fact that what we do have agrees is a good indication that the received view is correct (there are no serious alternative views of any antiquity about the possibility of any other author besides Mark). Also, there is nothing in the internal evidence (the reading of the actual gospel itself) which would contradict the received view, whereas reading it with the idea that John Mark was the human author seems to sync well with the text. It ought to be mentioned, however, that John Mark wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His authority to do so was derived from Peter (just as Luke's was from Paul). It should also be said that Mark, unlike Luke (who

had to do research, as he tells us), was an eyewitness (e.g., he's no doubt the young man who escaped at Mk.14:51-52).

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NIV SB: The evidence points to the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42), translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22, 34) and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13) -subjects of special concern to Roman believers (and to Peter as well; cf. 1 Peter). A Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid dissemination.

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Q: Do you agree that Gentile readers were the recipients of Mark's gospel?

A: This makes sense to me based upon the use of transliterated Latin words and more extended explanations of some of the Jewish customs as in the examples above. Here is a list of the former found [on the internet](#) (at the link):

The Latin words in Mark are census (κηνσος, “poll tax,” 12:14), centurio (κεντυριων, “centurion,” 15:39, 44, 45), denarius (δηναριον, a Roman coin, 12:15), legio (λεγιων, “legion,” 5:9, 15), modius (μοδιος, “peck measure,” 4:21), praetorium (πραιτωριον, “governor’s official residence,” 15:16), quadrans (κοδραντης, a Roman coin, 12:42), sextarius (ξεστης, quart measure, “pitcher,” 7:4), speculator (σπεκουλατωρ, “executioner,” 6:27), and flagellum (φραγελλω, “to flog,” 15:15).

What should be kept in mind about this, however, is that the Roman congregation had many believers of Jewish origin (not all of whom had been born in Rome) and a great many others who were of Greek origin with Greek as their original language. After all, the gospel is written in Greek, not in Latin. So it might be better to think of this as a gospel written for people who had never been to Palestine, even if they had some familiarity with Jewish customs.

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Mark 1:1 (NIV)

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,[a] the Son of God,[b]

a. Mark 1:1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One.

b. Mark 1:1 Some manuscripts do not have the Son of God.

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Q: Could you explain both footnotes?

A: On the first note, the Greek says *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, so this is only demonstrating that there are (at least) two ways to translate the Greek word *Christos*, either as 'Messiah' (a transliteration from Hebrew) or as 'Christ' (a transliteration from Greek). A true **translation** (of either the Greek or the Hebrew on which the word is based) would be "Anointed One", with the anointing (of the Spirit) representing Him as the chosen one of the Father who would fulfill all the promises and prophecies of scripture.

On the second note, the title "Son of God" is present in most mss. but in Sinaiticus it is added in above the line. Since there is a similarity of ending in this sequence, the omission is probably accidental. In fact, since these divine names are usually shortened to save space, what we would have in the text from which Sinaiticus was copied would be three capital upsilons in a row (since the convention was to use the first and last letters of the divine title as an abbreviation): *XYYY* = "...Christ, Son...", so the omission is understandable. The hand which puts it back into the text seems to be the same as the one transcribing the gospel in the first place (more evidence for the correctness of the text).

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Q: If my understanding is correct, the "X" refers to "Xristou", the first upsilon to "uiou", but I'm not clear about the last two?

A: Added in above the line in the text of the ms. are the letters YY THY, abbreviations for *hiou theou*, "Son of God".

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Mark 1:2 (NIV)

2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:  
"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way"-  
3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"

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Q: Mark says that the quotation comes from Isaiah, but the first part of it is from Malachi?

A: The convention was to attribute the quote to the major prophet in such cases. What Mark means is that Isaiah was speaking of John the baptist, and that Isaiah also was speaking of the same individual mentioned in Malachi. Isaiah gets the mention in the citation because his is the (by far) larger book.

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Mark 1:4 (NASB)

4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

NIV SB: They knew of baptism for Gentile converts but had not heard that the descendants of Abraham (Jews) needed to repent and be baptized.

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Q: What was the procedure of baptism for Gentile converts at that time?

A: There is some suggestion in the Mishnah (ca. 3rd cent. A.D.) that water purification should be used in the case of converts, but other than the famous example of Naaman the Syrian, this would mostly be an example of anachronistic projection backward from medieval practices. Remember too that the Pharisees who came to John wanted to know why he would be baptizing if he were not the Messiah – indicating that purification of the nation ***of Israel*** through symbolic repentance was in fact something they expected – from the Messiah.

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Mark 1:8 (NIV)

8 I baptize you with[a] water, but he will baptize you with[b] the Holy Spirit."

a. Mark 1:8 Or in

b. Mark 1:8 Or in

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Q: Which rendering is better here - "with" or "in"?

A: Either one works in English. The thing to note is that "with the Spirit" is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that is, the enduing of believers with the indwelling so that we are "in Christ" as a result (the two aspects of Spirit baptism, namely, His indwelling presence and our unification with Christ through the Spirit's baptism of us into Christ; see [BB 5 "Spirit Baptism"](#)).

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Mark 1:24 (NASB)

24 saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-the Holy One of God!"

NIV SB: 1:24 us. Although the man has only one demon, it speaks for the whole demonic realm, which quakes in fear at Jesus' presence. Holy One of God. A Messianic title affirming that Jesus is set apart for God's service and perhaps alluding to his divine origin (see Lk 1:35; 4:34; Jn 6:69). The title was perhaps

used by the demons in accordance with the occult belief that the precise use of a person's name gave certain control over him (see 5:7).

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Q: Do you agree with the point that "us" is used because the demon speaks "for the whole demonic realm"? Do you agree with the point regarding the using of one's name? I take it this is the same incident as the one described in Luke 4:33-35, which also occurs in synagogue, rather than in Matthew 8:28-32?

A: Verse 24 begins with *legon*, "saying", and the participle is singular. So there is only one demon speaking. I take this to mean as if a soldier were speaking on behalf of his country. The effect is to make the exorcism not "personal" as against one demon but general as against the entire "team" of evil. It shows that the demon recognized quite well what this all meant for his "side". On the "Name", no, I think rather that this ties into what has just been said, namely, it demonstrates that the demon was well-aware of who Jesus was/is and what was in the process of transpiring – this is recorded for our benefit that we might understand that even though the human interlocutors of Christ didn't understand His Person and authority, the demons certainly did. On the last point, yes, this is the same as Luke 4 but not Matthew 8 (which is also recorded in Mk.5 and Lk.8).

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Mark 1:28-29 (NASB)

28 Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

29 And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

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Q: Why does in verse 29 Mark resume the narrative with "immediately after they came out of the synagogue" if he

was just describing the incident of the man with unclean spirit?

A: The phrase here is *kai eythys* (καὶ εὐθὺς) and is in fact Mark's favorite phrase (41 times by some counts). He seems to use it to mark transitions rather than to express immediacy per se.

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Mark 1:29-31 (NIV)

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

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Q: Why did Simon's mother-in-law begin to wait on them having been healed, since our Lord went to her together with James and John?

A: She was feeling better. This fact is recorded for us no doubt to demonstrate the completeness of the healing which not only caused the fever to leave but restored the way she felt to normal, and instantly so.

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Q: I was wondering why she would wait on someone who has already come, but the word could be rendered "ministered" - *diakoneo*.

A: Right! It's that kind of waiting as in that of a waiter at a restaurant.

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Mark 1:41 (NIV)

41 Jesus was indignant.[a] He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

a. Mark 1:41 Many manuscripts Jesus was filled with compassion

NIV SB: 1:41 touched the man. An act that, according to Mosaic law, brought defilement (see Lev 13, especially vv. 45-46; see also Lev 5:2). Jesus' compassion for the man superseded ceremonial considerations.

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Q: Could you explain the discrepancy between the two renderings - "indignant" and "filled with compassion"? Do you agree with the note says that "Jesus' compassion for the man superseded ceremonial considerations"? Our Lord didn't break the Law and yet touches the leper. I think it probably has got to do with His divine power to heal overriding the Old Testament precept, but I'm not sure how to reconcile the two.

A: I have a hard time understanding why the 2014 NIV has switched from the 1984NIV "Jesus was filled with compassion" – that is what all the other major versions have, and what the Greek verb *splangnizo* always means in the passive voice. The only thing I can surmise is that the translator wanted to do something different (to justify the new secret version), and possibly was worried that someone might be upset at the idea that Jesus "became compassionate" on seeing this man since of course He **is** love and compassion. But either way it would be silliness. On the other question, I agree with you. The mere fact that our Lord was willing to touch a leper (and this happened on a number of occasions recorded for us) showed that He was Lord of the Law in every respect and in the process of fulfilling its promises of healing when the Messiah came.

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Mark 1:43-44 (NASB)

43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He \*said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."



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Q: It seems that Mark records our Lord warning people not to say who He was and what He has done more frequently than other gospel writers - is there a reason for it? Why did Jesus command the man to offer for his cleansing what Moses commanded?

A: Different gospel writers emphasize different things for our benefit. It's good to know this fact, and as I have pointed out before it demonstrates more clearly than is the case in the other gospels the practical problems that Jesus faced. The more these miracles became known and talked about widely, the more problematic the logistics of His ministry became (as more and more people thronged to Him). He had a specific mandate and a specific plan to reach all of Israel at that time in just the right way – it wasn't all about numbers and celebrity as is often the case with wannabe ministries today. As to the offering, until Jesus takes control of the state of Israel (and the world) Israel at that time was supposed to be operating under the Law (the true Law understood correctly and administered in truth as opposed to mindless ritual and human interpretation given the force of law). So our Lord was showing by this command that while He does supersede and fulfill the Law, He was not abrogating the genuine and properly applied essence of it.

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Mark 2:6-7 (NASB)

6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

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Q: How does Mark know what the scribes were reasoning in their hearts? Is it through the guidance of the Spirit?

A: Yes. One could make this observation about a good deal of the material in the Bible where the writer is giving us information he was not personally privy to apart from the Spirit (starting notably with the book of Genesis since Moses was born long after, e.g., the garden of Eden). Mark wasn't there and didn't interview these men – but the Spirit was certainly there.

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Mark 2:14 (NIV)

14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

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Q: Who is Levi? With regard to the sequence in which his calling is presented, it seems to correspond to the calling of Matthew?

A: Yes, this is Matthew. It seems that all of the disciples had two names, most likely a name given at birth, and another one given to them by the Lord. So not only Levi/Matthew, but also Simon/Peter, Saul/Paul, John and brother James / "Thunderers", Thaddeus/Judas son of James, Bartholomew/Nathaniel, Thomas/Didymus, Simon/Cananeus (zealot). It is true that we do not have alternative names for Andrew or Philip or Judas Iscariot. The last mentioned will be because of the fact that he was never a believer with a "new life" requiring a new name. The other two are simply not recorded for us but we can assume that they probably had them.

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Mark 2:19-21 (NIV)

19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

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Q: Why does our Lord move from talking about John the baptist's disciples fasting to sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth to an old garment?

A: I'm not sure we can always make this sort of connection in the gospels (or draw conclusions from the juxtapositions) since we are given only a small part, no doubt, of what was said on any given occasion (cf. Jn.21:25). Here it is perhaps possible to say that John representing Judaism and the Law, and the response to his ministry in proper response to the Law is different from how one ought to respond to the Messiah who fulfills the Law and brings in salvation (spiritual and, later, material).

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Mark 2:26 (NASB)

26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?"

NIV SB: 2:26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest. According to 1Sa 21:1, Ahimelek, Abiathar's father (1Sa 22:20), was then high priest (see note on 2Sa 8:17). house of God. The tabernacle (see 1Sa 1:9 and note; 21:1). consecrated bread. See note on Mt 12:4.

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Q: On this issue you wrote:

All of these passages can be reconciled by understanding a family tradition in this line of son/father/son/father name alternation (of the sort that is famous in Scandinavian countries). Parallels include John the baptist's relatives assuming that he would be named Zechariah after his father or alternatively after someone else in his family (Lk.1:59-61), and the recurrent names Maacah and Tamar in Absalom's branch of the Davidic family (1Ki.15:2; see NIV text note). According to this interpretation, Ahimelech is the son of Abiathar, his son's name is

Ahimelech, who in turn has a son Abiathar. The rest of the solution deals with the concept of "high priest". In none of these passages is the high priest identified. We know from the Law (e.g., in Num. 35:25 where the perpetrator of manslaughter must stay in the city of refuge "until the death of the high priest"), and from many later references that there was such an office. But as the Numbers passage shows, this was a life-long position. We also know that in the kingship of Judah, very often the "king", who was in one sense king for life, would "retire" and allow a son to reign in his stead (that is the only way to make the chronologies of the Kings and Chronicles "work"; see Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*). So I would conjecture that the true "high priest" was such until his death even at this time when David came to Nob; his name would be Abiathar (just as Jesus records it), and his son, Ahimelech, would be the person actually functioning in the main priestly role (Abiathar having retired from active duty on account of age). This would explain all of the other references above as well, even though they are often reputed to be "mistakes". We should not assume that it is the true "high priest" who is always the one being referred to, since the scriptures never say so. In fact, it may often be the case of a reference to his son who has taken over the duties (yet is not "officially" the high priest until his father's death). We probably have to do here with a "first" Abiathar (only mentioned by Jesus but known to Him through some other source), Ahimelech (killed by Saul), Abiathar (serving David but exiled at the end), and Ahimelech, his son, who had a role in David's reformation of the priestly duties, and, finally, his son, Abiathar the one mentioned as part of Solomon's hierarchy (the great, great grandson of the Abiathar named by Jesus).

Could you clarify the sentence:

According to this interpretation, Ahimelech is the son of Abiathar, his son's name is Ahimelech, who in turn has a son Abiathar.

It seems that according to it Abiathar has the son called Ahimelech and this Ahimelech has got a son called Ahimelech also ("According to this interpretation, Ahimelech is the son of Abiathar, his (Ahimelech's?) son's name is Ahimelech, who in turn has a son Abiathar), but according to what you wrote later, the names alternate:

We probably have to do here with a "first" Abiathar (only mentioned by Jesus but known to Him through some other source), Ahimelech (killed by Saul), Abiathar (serving David but exiled at the end), and Ahimelech, his son, who had a role in David's reformation of the priestly duties, and, finally, his son, Abiathar the one mentioned as part of Solomon's hierarchy (the great, great grandson of the Abiathar named by Jesus).

A: The "his" in the problematic sentence refers to Abiathar, not Ahimelech.

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Mark 3

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Q: Could you explain the origins of the gospel of Mark? It seems that what Matthew wrote in detail, Mark presents snippets of and moves quickly from one event to another. Sequence seems largely the same, although I'm not sure if it is always identical. Does Mark provide any details that other gospel writers don't? Also, how do we know it is a part of the scripture?

A: I accept the traditional view that this gospel presents a rendering of the events for a more cosmopolitan audience. And while the details are largely the same they are not identical. I can't do justice to this question in a few sentences – it would take a dissertation based on careful research. But it does seem to me that the impression we receive of our Lord and His ministry is slightly different than that of the other gospels – a very good thing. We are

watching things from a different perspective and that is always helpful in understanding and appreciating what we have.

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Mark 3:4 (NASB)

4 And He \*said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

NIV SB: 3:4 to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill? Jesus asks: Which is better, to preserve life by healing or to destroy life by refusing to heal? The question is ironic since, whereas Jesus was ready to heal, the Pharisees were plotting to put him to death. It is obvious who was guilty of breaking the Sabbath. they remained silent. See 12:34.

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Q: This is a very interesting observation which I have not come across before - would you agree that Jesus' words "or to do harm on the Sabbath" refer to the irony that He wanted to heal and Pharisees were already plotting to harm Him?

A: I agree. It's a very good note.

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Mark 3:14 (NIV)

14 He appointed twelve[a] that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

a. Mark 3:14 Some manuscripts twelve-designating them apostles-

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Q: Could you explain the point from the footnote?

A: The note includes a portion of Greek occurring in many later mss. but not in the earliest ones. It is most likely an interpolation based on Luke 6:13, so not a part of scripture here.

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Mark 3:21 (NIV)

21 When his family[a] heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

a. Mark 3:21 Or his associates

NIV SB: 3:21 his family ... went to take charge of him. They may have come to Capernaum from Nazareth, about 30 miles away (see v. 31).

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Q: What is the correct rendering here - "his family" or "his associates"? Are members of family meant here? What is meant by "take charge of him" or "take custody of Him" (NASB)? Did Jesus' family want him to stop teaching? This note links verse 21 with 31, but verse 31 starts with "Then" (Kai), so wouldn't this mean that it's a new episode? Would you say that kai can be rendered in this way?

A: This passage only occurs in Mark. The Greek says *hoi par' autou*, meaning roughly "those who were from His own" – so the phrase could comprise close associates or family or both. The situation seems to be that our Lord was working Himself to end of human endurance, and so much so that it was obvious to everyone who knew Him well. However, our Lord knew the limits perfectly, and pushed right up to the absolute line many times in the perfect service of a perfect ministry. This passage reminds us that in His humanity He was burdened in all ways such as we are, but overcame things we could never overcome through self-sacrifice and dedication (rather than special help from His divinity). As to the *kai*, it can't be retroactive. The note is speculative. As you suggest, the narrative is chronological. I suppose it is just possible to take the *kai* in v.31 as equivalent of *waw* in a disjunctive clause and translate, "now his family had come" – but even so it seems like a new incident to me, and I think that trying to see it as the same for the sake of explaining vv.20-21 is a mistake.

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Mark 4:11 (NASB)

11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables,

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Q: How specifically should we understand "the mystery of the kingdom of God"? Is it the entirety of the gospel message?

A: Paul also speaks of the mystery "of the gospel":

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.  
Ephesians 6:19-20 NIV

A mystery is something hidden which in our context and throughout the New Testament is a **formerly** hidden truth which has now come to light. That certainly applies to the good news and to all aspects of the plan of God which were not necessarily evident in a crystal clear fashion before the incarnation and the cross, but which were instead veiled until the time of revelation when the means of God's salvation, the Savior Jesus Christ, was Himself revealed to the world. During our Lord's first advent, part of the unveiling had taken place, but things were still in process inasmuch as the cross, followed by the resurrection, ascension, session and glorification of our Lord had not yet taken place. This time of offering the truth, offering the good news, offering the kingdom to those who ought to have received it with joy but who by and largely rejected it is therefore one of "half-light" because of the hardness of heart of this generation, a hardness which led to the offering of the good news to the gentiles, but which will be removed when the Lord returns.



But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

Romans 11:12 NIV

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Mark 4:24-25 (NASB)

24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. 25 For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

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Q: Could you explain the relationship between the words "Take care what you listen to" and the rest of Jesus' teaching here? I understand how verse 25 is linked to what our Lord has just taught, but the remark about our standard of measure being used for what we deserve to be measured to us isn't clear to me.

A: This has to do with the way in which we receive the truth. It's one thing to listen, another thing to hear. It's one thing to be warily evaluating the truth, another thing to accept it openly and fully like an innocent child. It's one thing to let some of it in conditionally, another thing to embrace all of it with an open heart. The "what" in v.24 (Gk. *ti*) is "how" in Luke (Gk. *pos* at Lk.8:18), and that is more what the accusative of respect means here too. So I would translate not "what" but "in what respect/manner", because it really is the **manner** of perception and not the content that our Lord is talking about when it comes to receiving the truth. With that understood, the next part should more easily make sense. If we are grudging in the way we receive the words of truth, we will be given a grudging measure; if we are really enthusiastic about the Word of God, it will be doled out to us generously and fully beyond our expectation. This explains a lot about the current situation of the church-visible: not much substantive Bible teaching available because there are not

many like yourself who want the truth in full and deep measure. Our Lord approaches this same issue with [the analogy of the good and bad eye](#) also in Matthew 6:22-23 and Luke 11:34-36 (at the link).

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Mark 4:26-29 (NASB)

26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows-how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

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**Q:** Could you clarify this parable? Is it to do with the expansion of the church?

**A:** I do think that this can be applied to the Church, but the main interpretation it seems to me has to do with the individual believer, the person who responds to the call of the kingdom. When we first believe, we know very little and we are spiritually not very strong, even though we have received the Word with joy. But as we grow, day by day, incrementally and all unawares, we turn around one day (assuming that we have been doing what we are commanded to do in the quest of spiritual growth) and find that Jesus Christ and His kingdom mean everything to us. What was once a small seed has sprouted into an enormous tree that dominates everything within us – and manifests itself in every way without. And when we have grown to full measure, we will have a goodly crop to offer to the Lord on that great day of days, whether the harvest comes for us in the natural course of things, or whether it is our lot to abide until the Lord's return (or whether we are martyred for Him in between).

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Mark 4:33-34 (NASB)

33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it;34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

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Q: How should we understand the fact that our Lord was explaining everything only to His disciples? I understand the application of Isaiah 6:9ff. here, but would this mean that only these twelve were willing to receive the truth? And if this should be the case, then how does Judas fit here?

A: As you note the prophecy was that few would understand, and so it turned out that although our Lord came to His own, they, by and large, did not receive Him as their Messiah (Jn.1:11). When the crowds came to Him they did so out of curiosity, out of the enthusiasm of the moment, and out of a desire to benefit (from healing, mostly, but cf. also Jn.6:15). But there were those who did desire the truth and to have a true relationship with God through Him. It says in Luke 6:13: "And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles" (NASB). In other words, the circle of "disciples", literally, "students" (i.e., those really willing to learn) was larger than merely the twelve who formed the special inner-circle. We also know about the seventy-two who were also special and sent out to evangelize all the towns and villages of Israel. And we also know about certain women who followed along and supported the Lord and His circle (and other positive believers such as Lazarus, Mary and Martha). So the number is greater than twelve, and was as great as the number willing to put Jesus and the truth before everything else in this life. It was not limited by Him but by the stubbornness and hard-heartedness of that generation. As to Judas, he is a special case, representing those who wanted to seem as if they cared but in reality did not (as opposed to those who were definitely in opposition). I have written about his circumstances at the link: [Judas](#).

\*\*\*

Mark 4:41 (NASB)

41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

NIV SB: 4:41 Who is this? In view of what Jesus had just done, the only answer to this rhetorical question was: He is the very Son of God! God's presence, as well as his power, was demonstrated (see Ps 65:6-7; 107:25-30 and notes; Pr 30:4). Mark indicates his answer to this question in the opening line of his Gospel (1:1). By such miracles Jesus sought to establish and increase the disciples' faith in his deity.

\*

Q: The reference to Psalm 65:6-7 is interesting (NASB):

6 Who establishes the mountains by His strength,  
Being girded with might;  
7 Who stills the roaring of the seas,  
The roaring of their waves,  
And the tumult of the peoples.

Since verse 5 establishes that what follows is said regarding God (NASB):

*5 By awesome deeds **You** answer us in righteousness, **O God** of our salvation, **You** who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea;* And since the miracle performed by our Lord directly parallels what is said in verse 7, could we take it as another reference for our Lord's deity?

A: Seems reasonable to me. I'd never connected these verses but it does seem to be a fulfillment of the Psalm or at the very least a demonstration of it. I suppose I had always just assumed that anyone present at this amazing miracle should have understood that only God could do something like that (no need to consult scripture about something which ought to have been so entirely obvious).

\*\*\*

Mark 5:1 (NIV)

5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.[a]

a. Mark 5:1 Some manuscripts Gadarenes; other manuscripts Gergesenes

\*

Q: How should the name of the region be rendered?

A: Here is what I said about the passage [in Matthew](#) (at the link):

All three of the synoptic gospels mention this place, and they all spell it slightly differently (at least in the original hand in Aleph). This is, in my opinion, much ado about nothing. When we have disciples called by different names entirely, it is not too much to understand that certain places with difficult names were variously pronounced (and spelled), according to the preference of the one doing the writing. I doubt any of the gospel writers had ever seen the place spelled in a text, so they each transliterated it into Greek as it seemed best to them. In the LXX, the town Megiddo is spelled dozens of different ways – a problem of making Hebrew names into Greek (which as we know is a problem with all Hebrew names coming into Greek, and Aramaic ones too). The point is that it is the same place, whether or not we wish to come up with a standard English transliteration – which will be different from whatever we decide is "right" in Greek – the town/region is the same in any case. No problem.

\*\*\*

Mark 5:5 (NASB)

5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

NIV SB: 5:5 cry out and cut himself with stones. Every word in the story emphasizes the man's pathetic condition, as well as the purpose of demonic possession-to torment and destroy the divine likeness in which human beings are created (see Ge 1:26 and note).

\*

Q: Since the likeness refers to the spiritual rather than physical, would you say that the point made in this note regarding destroying the divine likeness isn't true?

A: I don't find any biblical evidence to support that conjecture. I think it is dangerous to impute motives to demonic forces when these are not evident from context. Causing their "hosts" physical distress seems to be a common thing demons do – why they do it or why they do it in specific ways like this is not clear. It shows us they are not "on our side" in any way, and that is the important lesson for any believer to learn, especially if ever tempted to "negotiate" or have any dealings with demonic forces at all. We are to live and function as if they did not exist, even though we understand that they do and that this is a major source of the opposition we are encountering here in the world.

\*\*\*

Mark 5:6-10 (NIV)

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

\*

Q: What is the temporal sequence of this dialogue? When were our Lord's words from verse 8 said? Is it before the words of the possessed man from verse 6 and 7? There's one aspect of this event that I cannot understand - if the Legion of demons didn't want to be tormented, then why did the man approach Jesus in the first place, instead of running as far away from Him as possible? Should we

understand it as the man willing to seek help from our Lord and the demons not being able to overrule his free will in doing this?

A: As Luke 8:29 also indicates, these words of our Lord came first – and that makes sense inasmuch as once the demons are expelled they have no further means of communicating with Him. As to the man's reaction, you are exactly right: he was clearly desirous of being in control of his own free will again, and was able to assert it to this small degree in spite of the demonic pressure brought to bear by this large group of fallen angels – which goes to show that it's all about free will (demon possession too).

\*\*\*

Mark 5:19 (NASB)

19 And He did not let him, but He \*said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you."

NIV SB: 5:19 tell them how much the Lord has done for you. This is in marked contrast to Jesus' exhortation to silence in the case of the man cleansed of leprosy (1:44; see 1:34; 3:12; Mt 8:4 and notes), perhaps because the healing of the demon-possessed man was in Gentile territory, where there was little danger that Messianic ideas about Jesus might be circulated (see Introduction: Emphases).

\*

Q: Do you agree with the point made in this footnote? If the territory was Gentile, would our Lord want the man to report the things He has done at all, since He has emphasized on occasions during His ministry that He came for the lost sheep of Israel?

A: It would have been inappropriate for a gentile to have followed the Lord on His ministry because it would have been a distraction through offering up an unnecessary point of controversy for those in opposition (who wouldn't even deign to eat with gentiles; cf. Gal.2:11-14). On the other hand, giving this new believer something positive to do for the Lord was entirely appropriate, and gentiles

ministering to gentiles apart from the Lord's personal ministry constituted no breach of any policy or more importantly provided no apparent hindrance to the plan of God for Jesus' earthly presentation of the kingdom to Israel. He was about to die for all, and God wants all to be saved. For this man who recognized so well and deeply now the power and the grace of God and the reality of the One who had delivered him to go and spread the good news was a blessing on every hand.

\*\*\*

Mark 5:30 (NASB)

30 Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"

NIV SB: 5:30 power had gone out from him. The woman was healed because God graciously determined to heal her through the power then active in Jesus.

\*

Q: Since our Lord did not do this miracle Himself, what is the best way to explain it?

A: There are other instances of people merely touching our Lord and being saved (Matt.14:36; Mk.6:56), and we have similar things when it comes to the apostles (Acts 5:15; 19:12). What is different about this case is that the woman touched Him without being noticed – or so she thought. But this passage lets us know that power came out of our Lord when healings took place – which shows that there was a physical price for Him to pay with these miracles. Another important element to notice is that of faith. The woman believed that she would be healed if she touched Him and she was; and at the end of the episode our Lord tells her "your faith has saved/healed you" (Mk.5:34).

\*\*\*

Mark 5:36 (NIV)



36 Overhearing[a] what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

a. Mark 5:36 Or Ignoring

\*

Q: Which rendering is correct here?

A: I would render it as "disregarding" because that is what the *par-* on the standard verb of hearing, *akouo*, normally indicates in the NT – although it is true that the other meaning is more prominent in earlier Greek. It seems clear to me from the dialogue that our Lord did not just "happen to hear" this – He could not have avoided hearing it. So if that was the meaning, the simplex of *akouo* would have been appropriate. The addition of the prefix ought to mean something more, and that something is in my view that He did not pay attention to this negative report but instead bucked up the father's courage and proceeded to go where the girl was.

\*\*\*

Mark 5:42 (NASB)

42 Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded.

\*

Q: It sounds as if the girl got up and began to walk because she was twelve years old - why does Mark write "for she was twelve years old"?

A: Perhaps because the previous descriptions of her, *paidion*, *korasion*, and *talitha* could all be applied to a very young child who was not yet ambulatory (and that might be the most likely presumption of readers since death in infancy was a very common thing in the ancient world). By adding this *oun* ("for"), Mark gives another detail in the context of an explanation that at her age this was a natural thing for her to do (the same would have been true if she had been, e.g., five years old, but as it was

she was twelve – just barely still young enough to qualify for the terms used here for her). Incidentally, this gospel was written after that of Matthew where this detail is not mentioned (an example of Mark giving a detail to a mixed audience that might not otherwise have understood about the terminology – thus he headed off the wrong thinking that a baby was walking).

\*\*\*

Mark 6:3 (NASB)

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

NIV SB: 6:3 carpenter. Matthew reports that Jesus was called "the carpenter's son" (Mt 13:55); only in Mark is Jesus himself referred to as a carpenter. The Greek word can also apply to a mason, smith or builder in general. The question is derogatory, meaning, "Isn't he a common worker with his hands like the rest of us?" brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. See note on Lk 8:19. they took offense at him. They saw no reason to believe that he was different from them, much less that he was specially anointed by God.

\*

Q: How should we reconcile Mark's account ("carpenter") with Matthew's ("carpenter's son")?

A: There's no problem. It was expected that a son would follow in his father's footsteps, learning his trade and his business (especially in the case of the eldest) – since the father knew the most about his own profession and was practicing it, it would be natural to apprentice at least the heir. Joseph seems certainly to have been deceased by the time our Lord begins His three and a half year ministry which concludes at the cross and with the resurrection. If so as seems to be the case, there was a period of time when our Lord had to hold together the family business until such time as His brothers could do so. On whether or not *tekton* means "[carpenter](#)", please see the link.

\*\*\*

Mark 6:7 (NASB)

7 And He \*summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

NIV SB: 6:7 the Twelve. See notes on Ac 1:11; 1Co 15:5. two by two. The purpose of going in pairs may have been to bolster credibility by having the testimony of more than one witness (cf. Dt 17:6), as well as to provide mutual support during their training period.

\*

**Q: Why in your view were the apostles sent out in pairs?  
Do you agree with the reasons given in the note?**

**A: Both points seem logical to me.**

\*\*\*

Mark 6:13 (NASB)

13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

\*

**Q: Should we understand oil here similarly as the water with baptism?**

**A: Oil represents the Holy Spirit and His healing power, so, yes, this is a similar analogy. Oil and wine were the essential medicines of the ancient world, the latter against infection, the former to promote healing. Water is necessary for life and is analogous to the truth which is in turn necessary for spiritual life and growth. But the Holy Spirit is behind both symbols.**

\*\*\*

Mark 6:14 (NIV)

14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying,[a] "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

a. Mark 6:14 Some early manuscripts He was saying

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote? Matthew 14:1-2 also point to Herod as the subject rather than "they" or "some":

A: The Greek (Sinaiticus et al.) says "he", namely, Herod. There is an alternative textual tradition where omicron occurs instead of epsilon in the verb ending (which explains the alternative reading "they" instead of "he"), but that is a mistake: 1) there is nothing to break the narrative for a change of subject; and 2) Matthew 14:1-2 clearly shows that this sentiment came from Herod.

\*\*\*

Matthew 14:1-2 (NASB):

14 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, 2 and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

b) NIV SB: 6:14 King Herod. See note on Mt 14:1. Mark may here have used the title "king" sarcastically (since this Herod was actually a tetrarch; see chart), or perhaps he simply used Herod's popular title.

\*

Q: Why in your view did Mark use the title "king"?

A: Mark also uses *basileos* in the account of John the baptist's execution in chapter six (three times), so it's not ironic or an accident. No doubt Herod styled himself "king" just as his father had been. The Romans had reduced his "kingdom" and the extent of his authority, but would not have been so picky about titles when it came to supporting an ally when nothing in particular was at stake. I think rather that Matthew calls this Herod "the tetrach" in order to avoid confusion since he has given us the story of "the" more famous king Herod and the Magi earlier in the gospel. The same thing goes for Luke (who mentions the elder at Lk.1:5 – however, Luke calls the later one "king" at Acts 12:1 – a different book so no such basis for confusion).

\*\*\*

Mark 6:20 (NIV)

20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled[a]; yet he liked to listen to him.

a. Mark 6:20 Some early manuscripts he did many things

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: It's a question of reading *eporei* vs. *epoiei*. The former is correct: Herod was perplexed.

\*\*\*

Mark 6:22 (NIV)

22 When the daughter of[a] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you."

a. Mark 6:22 Some early manuscripts When his daughter

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: Certain commentators are bothered by the Greek of the best mss. which says, "the daughter of him or Herodias"; while it may seem clumsy in terms of more Classical Greek style, I have no problem taking this to mean from the Greek, "his daughter, [that is to say] Herodias' [biological daughter]". She is his step-daughter and "actual" daughter of Herodias by Herod's brother Philip; hence Mark's decision to explain fully (if not to the satisfaction of some textual critics). This was a problem in antiquity with some later traditions turning "his" to "hers".

\*\*\*

Mark 6:37 (NIV)

37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages[a]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

a. Mark 6:37 Greek take two hundred denarii

\*

Q: Which rendering is correct here?

A: The Greek says "two hundred denarii". "More than half a year's wages" is an attempt to turn this into a comparable amount for us (since most people don't know how much a denarius is). The rough rule of thumb is that a skilled worker often earned one denarius a day, so this would be less than a year's pay for an average person, probably, depending on what his profession was and how many days he worked. Jews did not work on the Sabbath or holy days, and gentiles also had a very large number of pagan holidays. Also, a person couldn't necessarily count on being employed every working day. Since the disciples are only estimating here in any case, I think their point is more like "a whole years pay".

\*\*\*

Mark 6:41-43 (NASB)

41 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.

NIV SB: 6:42 all ate and were satisfied. Attempts to explain away this miracle (e. g., by suggesting that Jesus and his disciples shared their lunch and the crowd followed their good example) are inadequate. If Jesus was, as he claimed to be, the Son of God, the miracle presents no difficulties. God had promised that when the true Shepherd came, the wilderness would become rich pasture where the sheep would be gathered and fed (Eze 34:23-31). Jesus is the Shepherd who provides for all our needs, so that we lack nothing (cf. Ps 23:1).

\*

Q: Would you agree that this miracle is foretold in Ezekiel 34:23-31?

A: I would agree that such provision is a Messianic sign and that the passage in Ezekiel – as well as other passages (e.g., the manna given in the wilderness) – allude to this sign. But food provided by God is symbolic of the more important gift of the body of Christ, "the Bread of Life", through the partaking of which we have salvation and the pledge of a new resurrection body in eternity. Moreover, the literal provision of actual food in abundance is fulfilled in the Millennium.

\*\*\*

Mark 6:46 (NASB)

46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

NIV SB: 6:46 pray. Mark's mention of Jesus' praying is further evidence of a crisis situation. On only three occasions in this Gospel (here; 1:35; 14:32-36) does Jesus withdraw to pray; each time a crisis is involved.

\*

Q: Do you agree with the note? What crisis was involved at Mark 1:35?

A: I don't see any particular crisis. Our Lord was under immense pressure at all times, and this pressure only got worse as He got nearer to the cross, culminating in the gauntlet He had to run to get there, and then of course the pressure and pain we cannot even imagine of bearing our sins. We are told to "pray without ceasing" and given many similar commands so that it is not at all surprising that our Lord spent as much time in prayer as possible. This was an opportunity to pray (crowd dispersed and disciples occupied) and explains our Lord's walking on the water not as some arbitrary thing but as a special and allowable dispensation so as to permit this time of prayer – He was able to "catch up" to the boat in this way (whereas if He had gone on the boat initially He would not have had the opportunity for prayer in private).

\*\*\*

Mark 7:4 (NIV)

4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.[a]

a. Mark 7:4 Some early manuscripts pitchers, kettles and dining couches

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: Earlier mss. omit "couches", but many later mss. add this word. It's probably been added in later based on Lev.15:4-5 (i.e., it is an interpolation).

\*\*\*

Mark 7:9 (NIV)

9 And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe[a]your own traditions!"

a. Mark 7:9 Some manuscripts set up

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: There is some confusion in the mss. tradition about the verb here. Sinaiticus has *krateite* which I believe to be correct. It would mean, roughly, "empower" so "hold onto" or "approve".

\*\*\*

Mark 7:11 (NIV)

11 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)-

NIV SB: 7:11 Corban. A Hebrew/Aramaic word meaning "offering" (see note on Lev 1:2). By using this word in a religious vow an irresponsible Jewish son could formally dedicate to God (i. e., to the temple) his earnings that otherwise would have gone for the support of his parents. The money, however, did not necessarily



have to go for religious purposes. The Corban formula was simply a means of circumventing the clear responsibility of children toward their parents as prescribed in the law. The teachers of the law held that the Corban oath was binding, even when uttered rashly. The practice was one of many traditions that adhered to the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit.

\*

**Q: Do you agree that the teachers of the law held that the Corban oath was binding even when uttered rashly?**

**A: If there is evidence to that effect it would come from later sources (i.e., the Mishnah at the earliest, and more probably the Talmud). Projecting a rabbinical opinion backwards as a rule universally adhered to in our Lord's day would be to follow an incorrect methodology in my view. The point is that many were using this dodge, a practice very similar in its effects to the indulgences sold by the medieval R.C. church. God has His own opinion regardless of what men decide – and that is a big part of our Lord's point here.**

\*\*\*

Mark 7:15-16 (NIV)

15 Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them." [16] [a]

a. Mark 7:16 Some manuscripts include here the words of 4:23.

\*

**Q: Should Mark 7:16 a part of the scripture?**

**A: No. It does occur in a number of mss., but only became "verse numbered" because it was present in the inferior edition used for the KJV version (N.B., versification of the New Testament was the invention of Robert *Estienne* in the mid 16th century for his critical edition of the Greek New Testament; the verses and chapters are not original to the mss.).**

\*\*\*

Mark 7:24 (NIV)

24 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.[a] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.

a. Mark 7:24 Many early manuscripts Tyre and Sidon

\*

**Q:** Could you relate to the footnote?

**A:** Sinaiticus has both nouns. The text does say "regions of", but one can see how a reader could easily have dropped out the second name accidentally or else through feeling it was impossible to be in both places (the venue was probably somewhere in between).

\*\*\*

Mark 7:35 (NASB)

35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.

NIV SB: 7:35 man's ears were opened ... he began to speak plainly. Jesus was doing what God had promised to do when he came to redeem his people (see Isa 35:5-6 and notes).

Isaiah 35:4-6 (NASB)

4 Say to those with anxious heart,  
"Take courage, fear not.  
Behold, your God will come with vengeance;  
The recompense of God will come,  
But He will save you."  
5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened  
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.  
6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.  
For waters will break forth in the wilderness  
And streams in the Arabah.

\*

**Q:** Since Isaiah says that "your God will come" and mentions the miracle which our Lord here performs, would you say that these verses could also be used as a proof our Lord's deity? Not just by the miraculous nature

of the sign itself, but also because of the reference to Isaiah's words?

A: I would agree. As far as "proof" goes, when you use this word it seems to me that you are considering the passage for apologetic purposes. So much truth would have to be already accepted a priori for this passage to make the difference for someone who was not a believer to accept Christ and His deity that its utility in that respect would probably be limited to conservative Jews (or those in groups who absolutely accept the Bible as is but not the divinity of Christ – a rare combination indeed). This passage is also millennial in nature, so the two advents would have to be explained as well. For those who don't understand the two advents but are receptive to the message, it might be just the passage to quote. Paul is reputed to have proved that "Jesus is the Christ" from the Old Testament when speaking with Jewish audiences, and this may well have been one of the passages he used (e.g., Acts 18:28).

\*\*\*

Mark 8:4 (NASB)

4 And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough [a]bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?"

NIV SB: 8:4 where ... can anyone get enough bread to feed them? The disciples' question reflects their inadequacy and acknowledges that Jesus alone could feed the people. They had not forgotten his feeding of the 5,000 (6:34-44) and were probably simply giving back to him the task of procuring bread. Alternatively, their question may reveal their spiritual dullness—they were slow learners (see note on v. 16).

\*

Q: Do you agree with the point that the apostles "were probably simply giving back to him the task of procuring bread" instead of showing their lack of faith and hardness of heart? It maybe is possible that the two are not mutually exclusive, but I'm not sure.

A: In the earlier case of the feeding of the 5,000, John records Jesus as asking Philip where they might procure enough food for this mass of people, adding "He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do" (Jn.6:6 NIV). So perhaps in the first instance the disciples could be forgiven for not understanding what the Lord was going to do; since this had not been the practice before, even if we were there (without knowledge of the miracle), we might understand that the Lord could do all things, but not anticipate that He would handle the situation in this way. Nevertheless, Philip's response on that first occasion about two hundred denarii being necessary to provide a minimum for each person suggests that he doesn't seem to "get" that the Lord was going to handle the problem in some way. By the time we get to this second situation, however, while the crowd is smaller though still very large, and while the resources are greater (seven loaves instead of five), though still very small, still the disciples don't seem to understand the power of God. Perhaps they had not "forgotten" the earlier miracle intellectually, but this is a good example of the difference between knowledge and "*epignosis*", namely, knowledge fully believed, assimilated, and acted upon. All Christians can look back at some major deliverance the Lord has wrought on our behalf, and many of us can look back at multiple times where the Lord has saved us from certain disaster of one kind or another. So how do we react when another such disaster is looming? Do we have confidence that He will bring us through? Or do we, like the disciples, retain an intellectual memory of the rescue without "getting it" to the point of being able to apply our past deliverance to our present situation? We have the promises of scripture. We have examples like this from scripture. And we have personal examples of times when the Lord has delivered us in spite of all expectation to the contrary. And yet it is still often hard to apply those truths when the pressure is on. In fact, it takes spiritual growth, learning and believing the truth and gaining experience in relying on it in defiance of what our eyes see, our ears hear, and

feelings tell us in order to get to the place of passing these sorts of tests with regularity. But the mark of a mature believer is that he/she does get better at this – as opposed, for example, to the children of Israel in the desert whom the Lord tested "ten times" and they failed all ten tests – even though they had seen with their own eyes some of the most amazing miracles ever recorded. This all in a nutshell sums up the human experience in general and the life's work of the believer in particular, namely, striving to get to the place where we can not only see the problems with the Israelites in the desert and the disciples in the presence of the Lord, but can also – finally even with difficulty – get to the place of doing better ourselves to the glory of God. Abraham was ready to sacrifice His most precious possession out of absolute faith that somehow the Lord would work it out – which of course He did (which of course He always does).

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Mark 8:10 (NASB)

10 And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

NIV SB: 8:10 Dalmanutha. South of the Plain of Gennesaret (see note on Mt 14:34) a cave has been found bearing the name "Talmanutha," perhaps the spot where Jesus landed. Matthew says Jesus "went to the vicinity of Magadan" (Mt 15:39; see note there; see also map). Dalmanutha and Magadan (or Magdala), located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, may be names for the same place or for two places located close to each other.

\*

**Q:** Do you agree that Dalmanutha and Magadan could be names for the same place or for places located close to each other? Which one is more likely in your view?

**A:** Here's what I wrote previously:

Whether or not Madagan and Magdala are the same place I would not be willing to say. Contemporary identification of biblical name sites, especially less well-known ones, is a treacherous morass. As to the names themselves, they are

little attested (especially Dalmanutha). They [i.e., M. and D.] are pretty clearly the same place since our Lord's departure thence occurs directly after the feeding of the 4,000. My own guess would be that Magadan is the chief city and Dalmanutha is the region/territory (for one reason because Mark says "parts" / mere of Dalmanutha).

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Mark 8:12 (NASB)

12 Sighing deeply [a]in His spirit, He \*said, "Why does this generation seek for a [b]sign? Truly I say to you, [c]no [d]sign will be given to this generation."

c. Mark 8:12 Lit if a sign shall be given

\*

Q: Could you explain footnote c? Why is "if a sign shall be given ..." rendered as "no sign will be given"?

A: The second translation is legitimate because of the grammatical construction. What we have here is a future minatory [warning/threatening] condition, which has no apodosis (i.e., no "then" clause following the "if" clause). Instead we have the figure of speech called aposiopesis. This is a lot like a parent saying, "Little Johnny, if you don't clean up your room right this instant . . ." – the implication being that something not good will follow (leaving it unsaid makes the threat more palpable). Both elements (the condition and the figure of speech) have the same force, so that the effect is one of strong denial but in an implied way only, deliberately left ambiguous to make the listeners reflect on their behavior. So while the defensible rendering is the way most versions go, it loses a lot in translation, becoming merely a negative statement, when in fact the idea is "your negativity and unwillingness to respond to the truth you are being given while whining for signs to amuse you is a symptom of the spiritual rot which is going to result in nothing good very shortly" – or something similar.

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Mark 8:11 (NASB)

11 The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.

NIV SB: 8:11 Pharisees. See note on Mt 3:7. sign from heaven. The Pharisees wanted more compelling proof of Jesus' divine authority than his miracles, but he refused to perform such a sign because the request came from unbelief.

\*

Q: So far I haven't drawn this distinction when reading this verse - between a "sign from heaven" and a miracle. Do you think it is scripturally valid?

A: I agree with you. After all, the word "miracle" is a Latin word. When it does correspond to something in scripture (in one translation or another) it's usually rendering *mopheth* in Hebrew or *dynamis* in Greek – meaning, literally, "beautiful thing" or "powerful thing" respectively. In other words, the technical meaning of the word "miracle" which we often have in mind thanks to the theology of Rome is not really biblical. Anything that astounds us is "a miracle". And, after all, everything God does is miraculous – whether we realize it or not. The Bible does speak of signs, by which it is meant things which can, at least to the eyes of faith, be interpreted in no other way but as communications from God. I don't think miracles and signs are mutually exclusive but overlapping. If there is any difference at all, it would seem to be, as this passage suggests, that "sign" seems to be more frequently used for something seen far and wide (as in celestial phenomenon, e.g., Rev.12:1; 12:3; 15:1; n.b., John does seem to make that distinction at, e.g., Jn.2:11). But all these words (wonder, power, sign) really are synonyms in terms of biblical force:

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some **sign** (*semeion*) performed by Him.

Luke 23:8

So I don't think the note is correct in making this distinction, but I do think it is a correct observation that "the signs/miracles" our Lord had been doing in their midst for years by this point were "not enough" for them – and nothing would have been enough for many of them. Even His rising from the dead was not enough (Lk.16:30-31), and even when He returns in glory there will still be some of "this generation" who will not believe. So the demand for a (greater) sign is merely an elastic excuse for their hardness of heart which they have no intention of changing no matter what (cf. Lk.7:32).

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Mark 8:16 (NASB)

16 They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

NIV SB: 8:16 Another possible reading of the Greek text could be translated: "They discussed with one another why they had no bread." According to this rendering the disciples were so concerned to find out who was to blame for not bringing more bread that they completely ignored Jesus' warning about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. Such an understanding heightens Mark's depiction of the disciples as slow learners (see 4:13; 5:51-52; 7:18; 8:4, 17-21 and note on 8:4; 9:32; 10:13-14, 35-40).

\*

Q: Would you agree that "the disciples were so concerned to find out who was to blame for not bringing more bread that they completely ignored Jesus' warning about the yeast"? I thought that rather than ignoring our Lord's remark, they misunderstood it.

A: Yes, they (typically) weren't paying proper attention to our Lord's words, regardless of the reason.

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NIV SB: In a unique excursion into pagan and semipagan areas, Jesus visited the districts of Tyre and Sidon and the confederation of free cities called the Decapolis. He was called to minister to "the lost sheep of Israel" (Mt 15:24), but the phenomenal public attention in Galilee was intense. Even here his fame had spread, and he could not keep his presence secret. The commercially magnificent cities of Tyre and Sidon had been a source of cultural seductiveness and religious heterodoxy since the time of Jezebel. The cities had been heavily influenced by



Hellenism; the sophistication of Greek culture was apparent in their coinage and architecture. Each was also a proud, historic center of Canaanite paganism, with tombs of ancient kings and temples to Melqart/Heracles, Astarte and various other deities.

\*

Q: This is an interesting point - how should we understand our Lord's visit to Tyre and Sidon if He came to minister to "the lost sheep of Israel"?

A: The trans-Galilee areas were part of historic Israel and no doubt had at least some Jewish population (and it was appropriate for our Lord to visit "all the cities": Matt.9:35). The visit to the Tyre/Sidon area is different, however, and seems to be a necessary rest period (Mk.7:24).

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Mark 8:26 (NIV)

26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into[a] the village."

a. Mark 8:26 Some manuscripts go and tell anyone in

\*

Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: There is one family of (late) mss. which have the alternative reading – this seems to be a gloss (explanation) added, probably in the margin of a lost ms., which won its way into the text of one strain of the textual tradition by accident. It is incorrect.

\*\*\*

Mark 8:33 (NASB)

33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and \*said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

NIV SB: 8:33 Satan. Peter's attempt to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross contained the same temptation Satan gave at the outset of Jesus' ministry (see Mt 4:8-10), so Jesus severely rebuked him.

\*

Q: This is an interesting observation I haven't come across before - would you agree that our Lord calls Peter "Satan" not just because of His misconception of who the Messiah was, but also because Peter's words are linked to the temptation used by Satan at the onset of our Lord's ministry?

A: I'm not sure I see the similarity. The devil was deliberately trying to compromise our Lord's mission (which would have resulted in our damnation) by tempting Him with physical need, lust and pride. Peter is putatively concerned with heading off our Lord's arrest and execution. The former is all self-interest. The latter is not meant as a temptation but as something done out of genuine concern. Of course Peter was so wrong, and his motives, even if not recognized at the time by himself, were not pure. Not understanding the purpose of the first advent and the looming cross, it no doubt seemed to Peter that if Jesus were executed, Peter's whole rationale in following Him would be out the window – and he himself would be next to be arrested and killed. But by attempting to dissuade our Lord from the primary objective of His mission, Peter was doing the devil's work in effect, even if it was out of ignorance and not entirely objective selfishness.

\*\*\*

Mark 8:35 (NASB)

35 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

NIV SB: 8:35 save their life. Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but eternal life will be lost. loses their life. Conversely, discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared with gaining eternal life (see note on Lk 9:24).

\*

Q: I take it that our Lord didn't here just mean the preservation of physical life or death through martyrdom, but also a life where the fleshly lusts are gratified and a life completely subordinated to serving Him?

A: I think the note gives the correct interpretation; making an application from this as you suggest to other aspects of living in this world is entirely legitimate.

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Mark 9:5 (NASB)

5 Peter \*said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three [a]tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

NIV SB: 9:5 Rabbi. Hebrew for " (my) teacher." three shelters. Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people (see Ex 29:42). Or he may have been thinking of the booths used at the Festival of Tabernacles (see Lev 23:42 and note). In any case, he seemed eager to find fulfillment of the promised glory at that moment, prior to the sufferings that Jesus had announced as necessary.

\*

Q: Do you agree with the reasons given here for Peter's words? I thought that the idea of tabernacles was rather a sign of Peter being dumbfounded?

A: I agree with you that this is the primary thing we are to take from Peter's response. Whether or not he had the feast of Tabernacles in mind (which is symbolic of the Messianic return of our Lord), mainly Peter was the sort of person who had trouble keeping his mouth shut when he didn't really have anything constructive to say (cf. Acts 1:15-26).

\*\*\*

Mark 9:9 (NASB)

9 As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

\*

Q: Why did Jesus tell the disciples not to tell about the transfiguration until He has risen from the dead?

A: Probably because it would prove to be a distraction. This happened in the period just before the cross. Once the resurrection had taken place, the transfiguration and its meaning would be understandable to those hearing about it in a way that wouldn't have then been the case contemporaneously. In 2nd Peter 1:16ff., the transfiguration is given by Peter as the most dramatic thing he personally had ever experienced in terms of miracles – but he is quick to point out (in v.19) that the written Word is more reliable even than that most sublime experience.

\*\*\*

Mark 9:10 (NASB)

10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.

NIV SB: 9:10 what "rising from the dead" meant. As Jews they were familiar with the doctrine of the resurrection; it was the resurrection of the Son of Man that baffled them, because their theology had no place for a suffering and dying Messiah.

\*

Q: Do you agree with this note? Were the disciples familiar with the doctrine of resurrection? It seems from the New Testament scriptures that many Jews were not.

A: I don't discount that the disciples were clueless at this point about the meaning of the passages in the Old Testament regarding the Suffering Servant (or the two advents), but this discussion seems to be pointed at the nature of the resurrection – which was a topic of some dispute among the Jewish factions then (cf. Matt.22:28-32) as it is today.

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Mark 9:11 (NASB)

11 They asked Him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

\*

**Q: Why do the disciples ask about Elijah at this point?**

**A: I think these "disciples" are the ones who were on the mountain and who saw our Lord appearing as He would in resurrection – but He was the one who was "transfigured" and took on the glorious appearance He now has. So it would be a logical thing for them to ask about, namely, why Elijah (not to mention Moses) were not resurrected first, since that is what the scribes taught, not understanding either the role of John the baptist, the Messiah's first advent herald, nor what would happen in the resuscitation of Moses and Elijah during the early days of the Tribulation. Christ is the first-fruits of the resurrection, but Moses and Elijah (whose types are Jesus and John) are heralds of the Messiah's second advent return and the resurrection He represents and effects at that time.**

\*\*\*

Mark 9:13 (NASB)

13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."

NIV SB: 9:13 Elijah has come. A reference to John the Baptist (see Lk 1:17 and note). they. Herod and Herodias (see 6:17-29; Mt 14:3 and note). As Elijah was opposed by Ahab and Jezebel, so also John was opposed by a weak ruler and his wicked consort. as it is written about him. What Scripture says about Elijah in his relationship to Ahab and Jezebel (see 1Ki 19:1-10 and note on 19:3). There is no prediction of suffering associated with Elijah's ministry in the end times. However, what happened to Elijah under the threats of Jezebel foreshadowed what would happen to John the Baptist. The order of events suggested in vv. 11-13 is as follows:(1) Elijah ministered and suffered in the days of wicked Jezebel; (2) Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, who in turn suffered at the hands of Herodias; (3) the Son of Man suffered and was rejected a short time after John was beheaded.

\*

Q: Do you agree that when our Lord says "as it is written of him", he is referring to parallel suffering of Elijah at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel?

A: In fact, Elijah suffered nothing at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel – though he did run away out of fear of suffering following Jezebel's threatening letter. I don't take Mark 9:13 to be a reference to 1st Kings 19:2. I think instead the "as it has been written of him" is referring to the first part of the sentence talking about his coming – it happened just as scripture proclaimed it would (phrase placement is often different in Greek than it is English; so the "as it is written of him" should be placed directly after the "has indeed come" in correct English renderings).

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Mark 9:16 (NASB)

16 And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?"

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Q: I'm not sure who does our Lord mean by the first and second "them" here.

A: The Lord is addressing the crowd and the "with them" refers to the disciples who did not go up the mountain with Him.

\*\*\*

Mark 9:19 (NIV)

19 "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

NIV SB: 9:19 unbelieving generation. Probably the referent should be restricted to the disciples. This cry of Jesus reveals his great disappointment with them (see note on 8:16).

\*

Q: What is the reaction of our Lord caused by? Is it to do with the lack of faith on part of His disciples, who didn't heal the boy or the lack of faith on part of the young man's father ("if you can")?

A: I disagree with the note. The man in question did not have sufficient faith in the ability of the disciples to heal the boy and for that reason he was not healed. As such, he stands as a representative of "this generation" of hardness which refuses to put its faith in the true power of God and the ministry of His Son.

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Mark 9:24 (NASB)

24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

\*

Q: This is quite a verse. Faith is a free will choice and the one choice which we have to make ourselves and yet the father of the possessed boy asks our Lord to help him overcome his unbelief. Do you think it's a legitimate request?

A: This is typical of how people think, denying responsibility for their own actions. Nevertheless, God responds to the slightest smidgen of faith on our part; though it were but the size of a mustard seed at first, He is able to make it grow into a mighty tree. I think this fellow had a modicum of faith, very slight (as is evident in his words) – and our Lord did heal the boy both in response to the request and for the sake of the faith of the crowd as well. I have written this up at the link: ["Help my unbelief!"](#)

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Mark 9:29 (NIV)

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer.[a]"

a. Mark 9:29 Some manuscripts prayer and fasting

\*

Q: a) What do the best manuscripts have here?

NIV SB: 9:29 This kind. Seems to suggest that there are different kinds of demons. only by prayer. The disciples apparently had taken for granted the power given to them or had come to believe that it was inherent in them. Lack of prayer indicated they had forgotten that their power over the demonic spirits came from trusting in Jesus and his power (see 3:15; 6:7, 13; see also note on 6:12-13).

Q: b) Do you agree with both points made here - firstly that there are different kinds of demons who possess men and secondly that the disciples took for granted the power given to them?

A: First, "fasting" seems to be a late addition. Second, demons are fallen angels, and they have different levels of authority and ability (just as is the case for human beings in any organization). The "ability" here seems to be a willingness – or better a temerity – to resist divine authority, in this case delegated by our Lord. Doing this sort of thing is something most demons would be reluctant to attempt – because they might be thrown into the Abyss. This particular demon was only willing to abandon his host when forced to do so by the Lord's direct power. Hence, in such cases, prayer – petitioning God for direct intervention – would be the only way to remove the demon, even in the case of these men who had been given this unique delegated authority. Today, **no one** has that authority, so that we all must resort to prayer in case we suspect such demon intervention. This incident provides a good palliative, however, for anyone being too impressed by supposed exorcists today. There are demons who would not even be moved by the apostles of the Lamb whose authority over them came directly and personally from Jesus Christ – how much less would they be subject to someone arrogating that power to themselves?

\*\*\*

Mark 9:33-37 (NASB)



33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and \*said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

\*

Q: I'm not sure how our Lord's words regarding the child from verses 36 and 37 are linked to the rest. Children are mentioned also in what seem parallel verses in Matthew 18:1-4, but there it is much easier to reconcile Jesus' point about the child with the rest of the discourse ("Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"), than here ("Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me").

A: I think the common thread is that of humility. Very young children naturally believe and follow their elders in authority over them (more so than when they reach, e.g., teenage years, at any rate). If we are acting in that manner, responding to the authority of our heavenly Father and that of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will naturally put aside all such worldly concerns and be concerned instead with pleasing them – rather than in defending and advancing our own worldly authority.

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Q: I'm still not quite sure why it's the act of receiving that our Lord emphasizes here?

A: If I'm understanding you correctly, the point is that we have to have a childlike non-skeptical faith to come to Christ. We can't put any conditions on it or demand proof or entertain mental reservations – the kind of things we learn to do as adults after being burned by unscrupulous

human beings. We have to be pure in our accepting of the truth from the Spirit (cf. 1Thes.2:13).

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Mark 9:38-40 (NIV)

38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Luke 11:23 (NIV):

23 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

\*

Q: So in Mark 9:40 our Lord says "whoever is not against us is for us", and in Luke 11:23 "whoever is not with me is against me" - are these two passages taken together to convey the message that there is no "middle ground" when it comes to spiritual matters?

A: I think that is a good application. Notice that the inclusive statement has to do with "us", whereas the exclusive statement has to do with "Me". In other words, while it is true that where the Church is concerned anyone who is doing anything that helps advance our cause in any way should be tolerated (e.g., Mormons handing out Bibles), when it comes to the main issue of accepting Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, there is no middle ground and we should not tolerate any blurring of the lines.

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Mark 9:43-50 (NIV)

43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. [44]  
[a] 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter

life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. [46] [b] 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where "the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched." 49 Everyone will be salted with fire. 50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

a. Mark 9:44 Some manuscripts include here the words of verse 48.

b. Mark 9:46 Some manuscripts include here the words of verse 48.

\*

**Q: a) Could you explain both footnotes - should the words of verse 48 be included also in verses 44 and 46?**

NIV SB: 9:49 The saying may mean that everyone who enters hell will suffer its fire, or (if only loosely connected with the preceding) it may mean that every Christian in this life can expect to undergo the fire of suffering and purification.

**Q: b) Which interpretation is correct here?**

**A:** The words in both cases are lacking from the best mss. and were doubtless added by later copyists from v.48 for emphasis. As to fire, I wouldn't absolutely rule this out as an application, but I don't think it's the right interpretation. Salt is a preservative so that the addition of fire in verse 49 is referring to the cleansing nature of that fire. As such, "everything", as our Lord says, will undergo a fiery cleansing. That is true of unbelievers (the last judgment), that is true of believers (when all of our "wood, hay, and stubble" is burned up but we are saved "yet as through fire": 1Cor.3:13-15), and that is true of the universe which will be consumed by fire and remade into the new heavens and new earth (2Pet.3:7-12). There are many other fire judgments as well, but in the context here, the terror which divine judgment ought to inspire should be motivation for us all to respond in the correct way (2Pet.3:11), and seek the good – striving to have "salt" in us, the truth believed which preserves unto salvation and a good evaluation before our Lord's judgment tribunal.

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Mark 10:2 (NASB)

2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.

NIV SB: 10:2 Pharisees. See note on 2:16. came and tested him. The question of the Pharisees was hostile. It was for unlawful divorce and remarriage that John the Baptist denounced Herod Antipas and Herodias (see 6:17-18), and this rebuke cost him imprisonment and then his life. Jesus was now within Herod's jurisdiction, and the Pharisees may have hoped that Jesus' reply would cause the tetrarch to seize him as he had John. Is it lawful ... to divorce his wife? Jews of that day generally agreed that divorce was lawful, the only debated issue being the proper grounds for it (see note on Mt 19:3).

\*

Q: This is an interesting observation - would you agree that the Pharisees were trying to receive a reply from our Lord that would cause Him to be seized?

A: I think it might be worth mentioning as a possible clever motive on their part, but I think scripture indicates that these individuals were trying to justify their own conduct and would have been happy to have had our Lord give them the answer they wanted. Also, given all the angst this passage has caused modern readers, I'm not sure what it is about our Lord's answer that would have endeared Him to Herod (nothing, obviously), nor am I sure that what He said wouldn't have provided enough "ammunition", so to speak, for these men to trap Him if they had reported the conversation. Still, we can't rule out motives of heart about which scripture is silent.

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Mark 10:5 (NASB)

5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

NIV SB: 10:5 because your hearts were hard. See 6:52 and note. Divorce was an accommodation to human weakness and was used to bring order in a society that had disregarded God's will, but it was not the standard God had originally intended, as vv. 6-9 clearly indicate. The purpose of Dt 24:1-4 (see note there) was not to make divorce acceptable but to reduce the hardship of its consequences.

\*

Q: I'm not clear about the point that the purpose of divorce "was not to make divorce acceptable but to reduce the hardship of its consequences".

A: I think what they mean is that divorce was bound to happen, given sinful human nature, so that the provisions for it in the Law were meant to minimize the damage rather than to encourage the practice – at least that is what I personally think about the passage (giving the note the benefit of the doubt).

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Mark 10:7 (NIV)

7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,[a]

a. Mark 10:7 Some early manuscripts do not have and be united to his wife.

\*

Q: Could you explain the footnote - what do the best manuscripts say here?

A: Most early mss. (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, for example) don't have the last part – which was probably added either because it was thought to have been accidentally left out or just because the scribe knew the parallel passage and ended up just writing it out automatically. Matthew 19:5 does have the whole thing (so the correct text here is another example of Mark's economy)

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Mark 10:17-21 (NIV)

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud,

honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

NIV SB: 10:17 man. Lk 18:18 calls him a "ruler," meaning he was probably a member of an official council or court, and Mt 19:20 says he was "young." what must I do ...? Cf. Ac 16:30-31 and notes. The rich man was thinking in terms of earning righteousness to merit eternal life, but Jesus taught that it was a gift to be received (see v. 15 and note). eternal life. See note on Mt 19:16.

\*

Q: a) Could you explain the point made in this footnote? It says that "Jesus taught that it was a gift to be received", but it doesn't seem to be the main thrust of our Lord's words to the young ruler, as He asks him about adhering to the commandments.

NIV SB: 10:18 Why do you call me good? Jesus was not denying his own goodness but was forcing the man to recognize that his only hope was in total reliance on God, who alone can give eternal life. He may also have been encouraging the young man to consider the full identity and nature of the One he was addressing.

Q: b) Can you explain how Jesus' words from verse 18 force the man to recognize that his only hope was in total reliance on God?

10:22 He went away sad, because he had great wealth. The tragic decision to turn away reflected a greater love for his possessions than for eternal life (see 4:19 and note).

Q: c) Can we draw the conclusion from this verse that the young man has made a definite decision to choose wealth, rather than simply leaving in sadness, seeing the difficulty of following our Lord?

A: a) You are correct. The problem with these legalists was that they believed that they had eternal life through following the Law; our Lord easily demonstrated to this young man that he was not perfect as he supposed – and hence was in need of God's righteousness given by grace through faith in place of his righteousness of works. b) What I would say on this is that having one's assumptions about "goodness" shot down like this was a critical part of

prompting the man's reevaluation of his system of works-righteousness. Obviously, only God is good. So how in the world can we be "good" on our own merits; and if we are not "good" in an absolute sense, how do we expect to be found acceptable by Him? That is the calculus that God has painted across creation in broad strokes; only by adopting a pseudo-system of "goodness" can anyone ever come to imagine they have achieved it on their own. c) Clearly not. Our Lord gave him something to "chew on" that would lead him to reevaluate his presuppositions about life's most important questions. If and/or when He decided to make a right choice we will have to wait to find out. But the purpose of the event and its recording is to place that same choice before everyone who reads the gospel.

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Mark 10:24 (NIV)

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is[a] to enter the kingdom of God!

a. Mark 10:24 Some manuscripts is for those who trust in riches

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Q: Could you relate to the footnote?

A: The addition is an explanation – added no doubt to assuage the anxiety of those who read this – which occurs in some good, ancient mss. (A and C, for example), but not in Aleph or B (for example). It's best to see the erroneous addition as an explanation along the lines discussed. Indeed, **it is** impossible to enter the kingdom of God – without someone to die for your sins. Our attitude towards worldly things and innate desire for worldly security is a symptom of our recognition of that supreme existential difficulty.

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Mark 10:31 (NASB)

31 But many who are first will be last, and the last, first."

NIVS SB: 10:31 first will be last. A warning against pride in sacrificial accomplishments such as Peter had manifested (v. 28; see vv. 42-44 and note on v. 43).

\*

Q: This is an interesting point. I thought that what our Lord means here is that the apostles may appear as last, but will be first, but the note suggests that it's a "warning against pride in sacrificial accomplishments". What is your take on this verse?

A: You are correct. It's an encouragement. I cover this sentiment in [CT 6 at the link](#):

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Mark 10:41 (NASB)

41 Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

NIV SB: 10:41 the ten. The other disciples. indignant. Possibly because they desired the positions of prestige and power for themselves.

\*

Q: Would you agree that this was the reason why the disciples felt indignant?

A: They were reacting in a worldly and fleshly manner to a worldly and fleshly request. The disciples were human, and they didn't yet have the permanent indwelling of the Spirit (and had proved reluctant to appropriate the Spirit's presence in their daily walk). It seems to me more of a typical jealous reaction to the perception that someone is getting an unfair advantage (which of course was not actually the case – and that was the wrong way entirely to think about these matters in any case).

\*\*\*

Mark 10:46 (NASB)



46 Then they \*came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.

NIV SB: 10:46 Jericho. A very ancient city located five miles west of the Jordan and about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem. In Jesus' time OT Jericho was largely abandoned, but a new city, south of the old one, had been built by Herod the Great. leaving the city. Luke says Jesus "approached Jericho" (Lk 18:35). He may have been referring to the new Jericho, while Matthew (20:29) and Mark may have meant the old city.

\*

Q: What is the best way to reconcile the two accounts of "leaving the city" and "approached Jericho"?

A: Here is what I wrote about this in the Matthew questions:

I'm not sure that the the two are not a different incident, but it is true that Matthew often calls attention to all participants instead of the most prominent one (as in the case of [the Gadarene demoniac](#): Matt.8:28ff.; see the link). As to where the incident involving Bar-Timaeus took place, I don't think that in fact the accounts of Mark and Luke are irreconcilable. Mark says in verse 46b, "while He was going through [the city] away from Jericho" – which two phrases taken together most likely mean "moving away from the city center but still technically in the greater area called "Jericho". Luke says in verse 36 that Bar-Timaeus heard the noise of the crowd "passing through" i.e., the center of town (verse 35 says that he was sitting by the road (no doubt on the far side of the town) when Jesus had approached the city from the east. After the healing, Luke has in verse one of chapter nineteen, "and having come in (i.e., to the city), He passed [completely] through Jericho". This means that Bar-Timaeus was sitting in the "suburbs", so to speak, on the west side, but still in what was known as "Jericho". In fact, that is the only way to understand *eiselthon* in verse one of chapter nineteen. So Luke adds a wonderful detail explaining how the blind man could have gotten prepared

(physically and also in his heart) for what he would do when Jesus came by.

\*\*\*

Mark 11:14 (NASB)

14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

NIV SB: 11:14 May no one ever eat fruit from you again. Perhaps the incident was a parable of judgment, with the fig tree representing Israel (see Jer 24:1; Hos 9:10 and notes; Na 3:12). A tree full of leaves normally should have fruit, but this one was cursed because it had none. The fact that the clearing of the temple (vv. 15-19) is sandwiched between the two parts of the account of the fig tree (vv. 12-14, 20-25) may underscore the theme of judgment (see v. 21 and note). The only application Jesus explicitly makes, however, is as an illustration of believing prayer (vv. 21-25).

\*

Q: Would you agree that the theme of judgment is present in the cursing of the fig tree and it being withered, even though our Lord only makes a reference to a prayer offered in belief?

A: I believe we are to take this as representative of the unproductive nature of the nation of Israel at that time (cf. Lk.13:6-9), destined to continue by and large through the Church Age – with the exception of Jewish believers; however, the blossoming our Lord predicts as a sign of the coming second advent is a prophecy of Israel regaining the leadership role in the Church during the Tribulation (Lk.29:29-31).

\*\*\*

Mark 11:19 (NIV)

19 When evening came, Jesus and his disciples[a] went out of the city.

a. Mark 11:19 Some early manuscripts came, Jesus

\*

Q: What should the scripture say here?

A: The text has "[He] went out", but some mss. have "[They] went out". Clearly, the disciples went with our Lord, but since He is the focus, it is acceptable and rather common in Greek usage to mention only the leader and to understand that of course His followers went with Him. No ms. of which I am aware has either the word "Jesus" or the words "Jesus and his disciples"; so I think the note writer has misunderstood the textual issue here.

\*\*\*

Mark 11:21 (NASB)

21 Being reminded, Peter \*said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

NIV SB: 11:21 Rabbi. Hebrew for " (my) teacher." fig tree you cursed. See note on v. 14. has withered. Perhaps prophetic of the fate of the Jewish authorities who were now about to reject their Messiah.

\*

Q: Would you agree that the withering of the tree stands as a symbol of the fate of Jewish authorities?

A: I would rather see this in the way described in the pervious verse/Q-A.

\*\*\*

Mark 11:25-26 (NIV)

25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." [26] [a]

a. Mark 11:26 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Matt. 6:15.

\*

Q: Should the words similar to Matthew 6:15 be included as verse 26?

A: No. Another example of Marcan economy – and of a scribe's desire to harmonize the text (motivation unclear). Lots of mss. evidence for verse 26 being an interpolation.

\*\*\*

Mark 11:30 (NASB)

30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me."

NIV SB: 11:30 from heaven, or of human origin? "Heaven" was a common Jewish substitute for the divine name to avoid a possible misuse of God's name (see Ex 20:7 and note; see also Introduction to Matthew: Recipients). Jesus' question implied that his authority, like that of John's baptism, came from God.

\*

**Q:** Do you agree that Jesus used the word "heaven" not to use the divine name of God?

**A:** Our Lord uses the divine Names in many instances so seeing this usage as a periphrasis is not the entire answer. No doubt on the one hand this makes the answer more acceptable to the Pharisees in the way it is framed; but more to the point it makes the attribution of John's ministry a bit more vague than saying directly "Do you think that God sent him?" Saying it the way our Lord said it took away any feigned sense of outrage the Pharisees might have chosen to demonstrate as a false issue and made the true issue of Christ's genuine authority all that much more clear.

\*\*\*

Mark 12:23 (NIV)

23 At the resurrection[a] whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

a. Mark 12:23 Some manuscripts resurrection, when people rise from the dead,

\*

**Q:** What should the scripture say here, considering the point in the footnote?

**A:** A very few later mss. add after "at the resurrection" the clause "when they rise"; it's a superfluous explanation (or "gloss"), and is not a part of the original.

\*\*\*

Mark 12:34 (NASB)

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

\*

Q: Why is it after these words spoken by Jesus that "no one would venture to ask Him any more questions"?

A: This is what actually happened. As to why it should have happened, all I can do is to extrapolate from personal experience. There have been times when I was at a presentation where there were questions following and the presenter was so on top of his/her subject and so direct and effective in smashing skeptical follow-up questions that no one else was willing to put their ego on the line to do likewise, even in a group of "experts". That seems to be along the lines of what happened here.

\*\*\*

Mark 13:4 (NASB)

4 "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

NIV SB: 13:4 The disciples thought that the destruction of the temple would be one of the events that ushered in the end times (see Mt 24:3 and note). sign. The way by which the disciples might know that the destruction of the temple was about to take place and that the end of the age was approaching.

\*

Q: How can we know that "The disciples thought that the destruction of the temple would be one of the events that ushered in the end times"? On what basis did the disciples link the destruction of the temple with the end times?

A: We can't – and, apart from what our Lord said about "not one stone" remaining on another, I don't think they would have had any such idea (that would be the link you

ask about, namely, what our Lord had just said to them prior to their question). After all, the biggest problem with the contemporary eschatological view which caused many to stumble over the truth Messiah was that they all expected that the next thing would be "kingdom come"; whereas in fact the cross had to come first.

\*\*\*

Mark 13:14 (NASB)

14 "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

NIV SB: 13:14 abomination that causes desolation. See note on Mt 24:15. standing where it does not belong. Cf. 2Th 2:4 and note. let the reader understand. This may be Mark's own narrative comment alerting the reader to the imminent fulfillment of this prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem (but see note on Mt 24:15). flee to the mountains. See note on Mt 24:16.

\*

Q: Were the words "let the reader understand" spoken by our Lord or added by Mark?

A: This was spoken by our Lord and refers to prophecy in Daniel – that is what should be "read and understood" in order to fully grasp the specifics of the eschatology. Matthew has a fuller version of what our Lord said on this occasion which includes the phrase "spoken of through Daniel the prophet". It is to that reference that the aside is applied by our Lord (Marcan economy leaves this out – it would be known from Matthew's earlier gospel).

\*\*\*

\*

Q: I'm not sure about the exact meaning of the Greek verb *anagignosko* from which the participle is derived, but if it is to be rendered as "reader", then wouldn't it make it more likely to be a writer's note rather than the speaker's?

A: Not if the speaker is talking to the audience about a book and how they should "read it" (as is the case here).

\*\*\*

Mark 13:30 (NASB)

30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

\*

Q: Should we take "this generation" in this verse as referring to the contemporaries of our Lord who would witness the destruction of Jerusalem, or does Jesus here refer to those who would experience the days preceding His second coming? If it's the latter, why does He say "this generation"?

A: "This generation" is referring not to a chronological "generation" in the sense in which we employ the English word, but to a "type" of person which will be typical of the Jewish race until the Messiah's return, namely, hardened against the entire idea of a suffering Messiah who as God and man would die for the sins of the world. More and more links at this link: ["The Two Witnesses"](#)

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\*

Q: I know that his is a rather lengthy inclusion, but I wanted to ask your opinion on the following chronological breakdown of the Passion week included in NIV SB - do you agree with what is given in it and the sequence and dates of events?

PASSION WEEK: Bethany, the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem: The Roman road climbed steeply to the crest of the Mount of Olives, affording spectacular views of the Desert of Judea to the east and of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley to the west.

1. Arrival in Bethany

FRIDAY (Jn 12:1)

Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover to spend some time with his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. On the following Tuesday evening, while

Jesus was still in Bethany, Mary anointed his feet with costly perfume as an act of humility. This tender expression indicated Mary's devotion to Jesus and her willingness to serve him.

## 2. Sabbath-day of rest

### SATURDAY

Not mentioned in the Gospels.

The Lord spent the Sabbath day in traditional fashion with his friends.

## 3. The "Triumphal" Entry

SUNDAY (Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19)

On the first day of the week Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling an ancient prophecy (Zec 9:9). The crowd welcomed him with the words of Ps 118:25-26, thus ascribing to him a Messianic title as the agent of the Lord, the coming King of Israel.

## 4. Clearing of the temple

MONDAY (Mt 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-18; Lk 19:45-48)

Jesus returned to the temple and found the court of the Gentiles full of traders and money changers making a large profit. Jesus drove them out and overturned their benches and tables.

## 5. Day of controversy and parables

TUESDAY (Mt 21:23-24:51; Mk 11:27-13:37; Lk 20:1-21:36)

### IN JERUSALEM

Jesus evaded the traps set by the priests.

### ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES OVERLOOKING JERUSALEM

(Tuesday afternoon, exact location unknown)

Jesus taught in parables and warned the people against the Pharisees. He predicted the destruction of Herod's great temple and told his disciples about future events, including his own return.

Day of rest

### WEDNESDAY

Although the Gospels do not mention this day, the counting of the days (Mk 14:1; Jn 12:1) seems to indicate that there was another day about which the Gospels record nothing.

## 6. Passover, Last Supper

THURSDAY (Mt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-26; Lk 22:7-23)

In an upper room Jesus prepared both himself and his disciples for his death. He gave the Passover meal a new meaning. The loaf of bread and cup of wine represented his body soon to be sacrificed and his blood soon to be shed. And so he instituted the "Lord's Supper." After singing a hymn they went to Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony, knowing what lay ahead for him.

## 7. Crucifixion

FRIDAY (Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 22:66-23:56; Jn 18:28-19:37)

Following betrayal, arrest, desertion, false trials, denial, condemnation, beatings and mockery, Jesus was required to carry his cross to "the place of the skull" (Mt 27:33), where he was crucified with two other prisoners.

## 8. In the tomb

Jesus' body was placed in the tomb before 6:00 p. m. Friday evening, when the Sabbath began and all work stopped, and it lay in the tomb throughout the Sabbath.

## 9. Resurrection

SUNDAY (Mt 28:1-10; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-49; Jn 20)

Early in the morning, women went to the tomb and found that the stone closing the tomb's entrance had been rolled back. An angel told them Jesus was alive and gave them a message. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, to Peter, to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and later that day to all the disciples but Thomas.



A: Not entirely, although this is helpful. Another helpful (and not entirely correct) treatment can be found in chart form in Thomas and Gundry's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (p. 349). Rather than dissect this piece by piece, since you don't have specific questions about it, I would ask you to please have a look at BB 4A where these things are discussed including the chronological issues: ["The Last Passover"](#)

\*\*\*

Mark 14:3 (NASB)

3 While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

NIV SB: 14:3-9 In John's Gospel this incident is placed before the beginning of Passion Week (see Jn 12:1-11 and note). Matthew and Mark may have placed it here to contrast the hatred of the religious leaders and the betrayal by Judas with the love and devotion of the woman who anointed Jesus.

\*

**Q: Do you agree with the reason given in NIV SB for Matthew's and Mark's placing this incident differently than John? John 12:1-3 says that Jesus came to Bethany "six days before the Passover":**

John 12:1-3 (NASB)

12 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a [a]pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**But Mark 14:1 says that the Passover was only "two days away".**

**A: Mark is filling in this incident: "Now while He had been in Bethany (i.e., several days earlier) . . . ". The NIV SB note has value and may provide a possible explanation for the way Mark (and Matthew) have told the story**

somewhat differently under the Spirit's guidance, but I don't think we can be dogmatic about it.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:4 (NASB)

4 But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"

NIV SB: 14:4 Some of those present. Mt 26:8 identifies them as the disciples, while Jn 12:4-5 singles out Judas Iscariot.

\*

**Q:** Should we understand that more than Judas opposed, but he is the one who uttered these words?

**A:** The Greek states that all of these "some" were discussing the matter; Judas is singled out for his complete hypocrisy.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:8 (NASB)

8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

NIV SB: 14:8 prepare for my burial. It was a normal Jewish custom to anoint a dead body with aromatic oils in preparing it for burial (see 16:1 and note). Jesus seems to anticipate suffering a criminal's death, for only in that circumstance was there no anointing of the body.

\*

**Q:** Could you explain this note - If there was no anointing for the body when one was to suffer criminal's death, then why, based on this, the note says that Jesus seems to anticipate such death?

**A:** Mary's action will be retold "in memory of her" because she was apparently the **only one** who "got" what Jesus had been telling them all over and over again for at least the better part of a year, namely, that He as the Christ had

to suffer death to provide salvation (cf. Is.53:1ff.). I think getting into the weeds on this other point is therefore a mistake which distracts from the point the Spirit is making here of praising Mary's listening **and believing** what the Lord had said.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:17 (NASB)

17 When it was evening He came with the twelve.

NIV SB: 14:17 evening. Thursday of Passion Week.

\*

Q: How do we know it was Thursday?

A: He rose on Sunday; therefore He was crucified on Friday (three days counting inclusively according to the Jewish system); therefore the night before was Thursday (as we see things in our 24 hour clock). There is a good deal about this at Ichthys because a lot of people make a great deal about the chronology here, although it is rather insignificant spiritually speaking. See the link: ["Aspects of the Crucifixion"](#)

\*\*\*

Mark 14:18 (NASB)

18 As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me."

NIV SB: 14:18 reclining at the table eating. Originally the Passover meal was eaten standing (see Ex 12:11), but in Jesus' time it was customary to eat it while reclining (cf. v. 3 and note). Truly I tell you. See note on 3:28.

\*

Q: There seems to be no reference made to the Passover being eaten standing in Exodus 12:11?

A: When I read "This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.", while standing is not mentioned, the context was of removing oneself from Egypt as soon as possible, and that is why the person would be holding his staff (usually only done when standing), i.e., being on the point of walking out.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:24 (NIV)

24 "This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

a. Mark 14:24 Some manuscripts the new

\*

Q: Should the passage say "the covenant" or "the new covenant"?

A: Many ms. have "new" but Sinaiticus does not. It is obvious that this is what is meant, however, so the Spirit has allowed the word "covenant" alone to have that force of change here (instead of the word "new" which attracts our attention in Luke).

\*\*\*

Mark 14:43 (NASB)

43 Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, \*came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

NIV SB: 14:43 Judas. See note on 3:19. crowd armed with swords and clubs. Auxiliary police or servants of the court assigned to the task of maintaining public order beyond the precincts of the temple. Jn 18:3 indicates that at least some of the Roman cohort of soldiers were in the arresting group, along with officers of the temple guard. The fact that some carried clubs suggests that they were conscripted at the last moment. chief priests ... teachers of the law ... elders. See notes on 8:31; Mt 2:4. The warrant for Jesus' arrest had been issued by the Sanhedrin.

\*

Q: Do you agree that carrying clubs indicates that some of those who came were conscripted at the last moment?

A: Judea was a Roman protectorate, and while we may not know the specifics of just exactly how the Romans exercised their authority in Jerusalem, it was standard Roman practice to ban weapons, and particularly the carrying of weapons, within metropolitan areas – except by authorized persons. The temple guards would be an example of such an authorized group as were, apparently, Herod's soldiers. The opponents of our Lord thought of Him and His followers as revolutionaries and no doubt anticipated an armed struggle; for that reason they would want to mobilize as many people as possible. This would include all the "retainers" (or clients, in the Roman way of thinking about these things) of the wealthy men who agreed with this night-time attack. Arming these men with swords, even if such weapons were available (which is questionable in Jerusalem under Roman rule) would be a risky policy. The Romans hadn't been a party to this raid – the plan was to get Pilate's support later – and they would not be keen about large armed bands who were not authorized to carry weapons wandering about in the night.

\*\*\*

NIV SB: 14:53-15:15 Jesus' trial took place in two stages: a Jewish trial and a Roman trial. By harmonizing the four Gospels, it becomes clear that each trial had three episodes. For the Jewish trial these were: (1) the preliminary hearing before Annas, the former high priest (reported only in Jn 18:12-14, 19-23); (2) the trial before Caiaphas, the ruling high priest, and the Sanhedrin (14:53-65; see Mt 26:57-68; Lk 22:54-65; Jn 18:24); and (3) the final action of the council, which terminated its all-night session (15:1; see Mt 27:1; Lk 22:66-71). The three episodes of the Roman trial were: (1) the trial before Pilate (15:2-5; see Mt 27:11-26; Lk 23:1-5; Jn 18:28-19:16); (2) the trial before Herod Antipas (only in Lk 23:6-12); and (3) the trial before Pilate continued and concluded (15:6-15). Since Matthew, Mark and John give no account of Jesus before Herod Antipas, the trial before Pilate forms a continuous and uninterrupted narrative in these Gospels.

\*

Q: Do you agree with the outline given here?

A: Yes, for the most part. Please see the link in BB 4A where this is outlined in detail: ["The Seven Trials of Christ"](#)

\*\*\*

Mark 14:61 (NASB)

61 But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

NIV SB: 14:61 remained silent. See Isa 53:7 and note. Messiah. See first NIV text note on 1:1. Son of the Blessed One. "The Blessed One" was a way of referring to God without pronouncing his name (cf. note on 11:30). The title was therefore equivalent to "Son of God" (1:1; 15:39), though in this context it would seem not to refer to deity but to royal Messiahship, since in popular Jewish belief the Messiah was to be a man, not God.

\*

Q: Do you agree that the Jews didn't expect the Messiah to be God? It's difficult for me to reconcile this conclusion with what NIV SB says shortly after:

14:64 blasphemy. Not only involved reviling the name of God (see Lev 24:10-16) but also included any affront to his majesty or authority (see Mk 2:7 and note; 3:28-29; Jn 5:18 and note; 10:33). Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and, in fact, to have majesty and authority belonging only to God was therefore regarded by Caiaphas as blasphemy, for which the Mosaic law prescribed death by stoning (Lev 24:16).

So if the Jews didn't believe in Messiah's deity, then why did they consider Jesus' claim to be the Messiah as a blasphemy which included usurping God's majesty and authority?

A: It's a good point; I don't undertake to defend the SB on this point. Clearly, the position of the Jewish leaders at that time was ambiguous. Also clearly, they were really not interested in God at all, even though they devoted their lives to pretending they were, because if they really did love Him they would have accepted Him by accepting His Son (Is.29:13; cf. Jn.1:11). There was for "this generation" and there remains today in Israel a "blindness

in part" when it comes to the One who died for them and for us (Rom.11:25). They seem willing enough to accept God but not a Messiah who is human and divine. Still, it is also true that the office of Messiah is so august in their eyes that anyone falsely claiming to be that is guilty of "blasphemy". For those who did see in the title Son of God something divine (if not somehow on the level of the Father), the idea of a suffering Messiah – as opposed to a conquering one – was equally repugnant. So to be fair to the SB, it's not as if we can assign any sort of solidarity to the false opinions of the day or any consistency therein.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:65 (NASB)

65 Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

NIV SB: 14:65 began to spit at him ... struck him with their fists. Conventional gestures of rejection and condemnation (see Nu 12:14; Dt 25:9; Job 30:10; Isa 50:6 and note). blindfolded him. A rabbinic interpretation of Isa 11:2-4 held that the Messiah could judge by smell without the aid of sight. Prophecy! Say who it was who struck you!

\*

**Q:** Could you refer to the point about the rabbinic interpretation of Isaiah 11:2-4 and the application of it to these events?

**A:** These interpretations come centuries after the fact, and while they may occasionally contain information that does go back to early days, there's no guarantee of it. Also, there is no guarantee that the people doing this had such a parallel in mind. It's pretty clear from the context what is happening.

\*\*\*

Mark 14:68 (NIV)

68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.[a]

a. Mark 14:68 Some early manuscripts entryway and the rooster crowed

Q: a) I take it that the fragment from the footnote is a late addition and not a part of the scripture?

NIV SB: 14:68 I don't know or understand what you're talking about. An expression used in Jewish law courts for a formal, legal denial.

Q: b) How do we know that this expression was used in Jewish law courts?

A: I note that no citation is referenced, and know of no parallel. Also, I'm not sure how it would be possible to know this, given surviving sources (so I would be curious to know the putative basis for this assertion). I don't think we need to make this any worse for Peter than it already is. On the crowing of the cock, three denials precede the crowing, just as our Lord prophesied. How false ideas intruded into the ms. tradition is discussed at the link: [Crowing of the Rooster](#)

\*\*\*

Mark 14:72 (NASB)

72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." [a]And he began to weep.

a. Mark 14:72 Or Thinking of this, he began weeping or Rushing out, he began weeping

\*

Q: What should the end of the verse say?

A: The issue is the translation of the participle *epibalon* which, translated literally without taking the idiom demanded by the context into consideration, ought to mean something like "having shot at [something]". However, the verb *ballo* and its compounds are frequently used in a wide variety of ways. I think, "he broke down and began to weep" is a good way to render it. At Mark 4:37 the verb means "rush upon" of waves against a ship



(so "rush out" might be possible); the other suggested meaning would require us to understand "his heart/mind" as the object left out and "this matter" as the secondary object, also left out – but I don't know of any parallel in the language for this *double* omission in the case of this verb. The verb in the aorist as it is here often means to interject or interrupt, so "broke down" as in "interrupted himself in this pattern of thinking so as to come back to his spiritual senses" is about as close as I can come here.

\*\*\*

Mark 15:1 (NIV)

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

NIV SB: 15:1 Very early in the morning. The working day of a Roman official began at daylight. morning. Friday of Passion Week. Sanhedrin. See note on 14:55. made their plans. Apparently to accuse Jesus before the civil authority for treason rather than blasphemy (see Lk 23:1-14 and note on 23:2). Pilate. See note on Lk 3:1.

\*

Q: This seems like a valid observation - would you agree that the Jews wanted to accuse our Lord for treason rather than blasphemy, as this perhaps would make it more likely that He would be convicted?

A: I think it was the penalty that was the issue rather than the conviction. It seems to be the case – although this is a perennially debated question – that the Romans had reserved the right of capital punishment for themselves, taking it away from the Judean officials (whether religious or civil). Blasphemy, according to the Law, was punishable by death, but whether Pilate would see claiming to be the Messiah as a capital offense was far less certain – and indeed they were right about this point. What swayed the case is recorded in John:

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no

friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

John 19:12 NIV

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Mark 15:22 (NASB)

22 Then they \*brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.

NIV SB: 15:22 the place of the skull. It may have been a small hill that looked like a skull, or it may have been so named because of the many executions that took place there.]

\*

Q: Do we know the etymology of this name?

A: The etymology is biblically given so yes.

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\*

Q: I asked wrong question here - do we know why the place was named "Place of a Skull" - is it to do with its shape or the executions that took place there?

A: I don't know of any biblical reference which would further elucidate this. The place considered to be Calvary today may not even be correctly identified (that's true of many traditional locales in Jerusalem). Positing that the place looked like a skull seems reasonable. There has been a lot of speculation about this both in antiquity and modern times.

\*\*\*

Mark 15:28 (NASB)

28 [[a]And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]

a. Mark 15:28 Early mss do not contain this v.

\*

Q: Should this verse be a part of the scripture?

A: It's not in the best mss. and seems to have been put in as a gloss; since it is so close in language to what one would expect from the text (based on Isaiah 53:12 and Luke 22:37), it made its way therein in one late tradition.

\*\*\*

Mark 15:34 (NASB)

34 At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

NIV SB: 15:34 The words were spoken in a dialect of Aramaic, one of the languages commonly spoken in the Holy Land in Jesus' day. They reveal how deeply Jesus felt his abandonment by God as he bore "the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; but see introduction to Ps 22 and note on Ps 22:1).

\*

Q: Would you agree with the note here about these words revealing "how deeply Jesus felt his abandonment by God"? From our correspondence I gather that it is a deliberate quotation of Psalm 22:1, which ends with a proclamation of victory.

A: You are correct. The SB version is the standard interpretation which absolutely misunderstands everything about our Lord and His sacrifice. Full and formal coverage is found at the link: [The 22nd Psalm](#)

\*\*\*

Mark 15:35 (NASB)

35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah."

NIV SB: 15:35 Elijah. The bystanders mistook the first words of Jesus' cry ("Eloi, Eloi") to be a cry for Elijah. It was commonly believed that Elijah would come in times of critical need to protect the innocent and rescue the righteous (v. 36).

\*

Q: Would you agree that Jesus' words were misinterpreted by the bystanders?

A: Absolutely yes. The crowd were mostly Judean and spoke Hebrew, so they misinterpreted the Aramaic quotation.

\*\*\*

Mark 15:39 (NIV)

39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died,[a] he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

a. Mark 15:39 Some manuscripts saw that he died with such a cry

\*

Q: What should the scripture say in this verse - should the words from the footnote be included?

A: No. *kraxanta* only occurs in one later ms. and in the Latin version.

\*\*\*

Mark 16:1 (NASB)

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.

NIV SB: 16:1 Sabbath was over. About 6:00 p. m. Saturday evening. No purchases were possible on the Sabbath.

\*

Q: How do we know that Sabbath was over at 6:00 p.m.?

A: In the ancient world, hours were determined by sunlight or the lack thereof, not according to mechanical watches (which is how and why sundials work). So the Sabbath (or any day) would always end at sundown, the end of the "twelfth hour" – which would then begin the

first hour of the night. I suppose for the benefit of English readers, therefore, this is not a bad approximation for a date close to the spring equinox where a Greek/Roman hour would be close to sixty minutes day or night (they get longer in the daytime until the summer solstice).

\*\*\*

Mark 16:7 (NASB)

7 But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'

NIV SB: 16:7 and Peter. Jesus showed special concern for Peter, in view of his confident boasting and subsequent denials (14:29-31, 66-72). just as he told you. See 14:28.

\*

**Q:** Our Lord showed concern for Peter in view of his boasting, but why does the angel make a special mention of him? Should angel's mentioning of Peter be taken as evidence for Peter's preeminent position among the disciples?

**A:** This does show that Peter is the leader of the group in terms of personality; we see that in the early days of Acts as well. In any group of eleven men, someone will usually take the lead, just by virtue of differing personalities. This mention recognizes that fact without investing Peter with any special spiritual authority.

\*\*\*

Mark 16:8 (NIV)

8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.[a]

a. Mark 16:8 Some manuscripts have the following ending between verses 8 and 9, and one manuscript has it after verse 8 (omitting verses 9-20): Then they quickly reported all these instructions to those around Peter. After this, Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.

\*

Q: Is the verse quoted in the footnote a part of the scripture?

A: No. The verse and the book ends with this – to us – odd seeming conclusion. On the other hand, it leaves the reader hungry for more, eager to know more about the resurrection, the kingdom to come, and all other doctrines of the Bible – so a non-conclusion conclusion at the end of the gospel story makes a great deal of sense when you think about it: keep reading, keep seeking the truth.

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