**Mark Commentary**

**Mark Chapter 1**

Mar 1:1

**“The beginning.”** Mark is the only Gospel that has anything like the phrase, “the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ.” Yet when we understand that Mark is the Gospel that portrays Jesus Christ as the Servant of God, we can see that the phrase fits perfectly with the purpose of Mark (see commentary below on “the Good News of Jesus Christ” as to why there are four Gospels). Jesus Christ’s ministry as the obedient and suffering Servant of God came to an end with his death, which is why in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus never appears after his death. He was resurrected, not as a servant, but as Lord of all. But the Good News of Jesus Christ did not end with his death. It continued with his resurrection, his ascension, and now with his ministry from heaven. Thus Mark, which portrays Jesus as the Servant of God, only gives us the “beginning” of the Good News concerning him. In contrast to Jesus’ ministry as a Servant, which came to an end, his ministry as King (Matthew); human man (Luke); and Son of God (John) continues to this day, and Matthew, Luke, and John all have post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ.

Some scholars have suggested that the word “beginning” refers to the start of Jesus’ ministry, as if the verse read, “This is the way the Good News of Jesus begins.” However, that cannot be correct. The “Good News” of Jesus began many years before John the Baptist came on the scene. At his birth about 30 years before, the angel announced that Jesus’ birth was “Good News” (Luke 2:10).

**“the good news of Jesus Christ.”** It is sometimes asked why there are four Gospels. Part of the answer is likely that for any testimony to be validated, there needs to be 2 or 3 witnesses (Deut. 17:6, 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28), and the four Gospels provide that, especially since Matthew and John were eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, the accounts by Mark and Luke have been recognized by most Christians not only as authentic historical documents, but also as God-inspired records of the life of Christ just as Matthew and John are.

The second reason there are Four Gospels is that each is written from a different perspective, and together they comprise a very profound, prophetic, and precise fourfold pattern of the Messiah. The pattern set forth in the four Gospels is that Matthew portrays Christ as a king, Mark as a servant, Luke as a man, and John as the Son of God. This pattern had already been set forth and foreshadowed long before by the Old Testament prophets. This fourfold pattern has its roots in an important Hebrew term used in the prophecies of Christ, which is *tsemach*. *Tsemach* means “sprout” or “offspring,” and is often translated “Branch,” and the vital “Branch,” and center of Old Testament prophecy is the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

*Tsemach* paints a mental picture of a new sprout or shoot coming up out of a dead-looking stump, certainly an appropriate picture of the Messiah, because just when it looked like Israel was cut down and dead, out of it sprang the Messiah. In the Old Testament, *tsemach* is used five times in direct prophetic reference to the Messiah and aspects of his life. Although “the branch” was a common term for the Messiah, five Old Testament verses in particular lay out a fourfold prophetic picture of him. In two verses the Branch is shown to be a king (Jer. 23:5; 33:15), also the Branch is shown as a servant (Zech. 3:8), also the Branch is shown to be a man (Zech. 6:12), and also, the Branch is shown to be “the Branch of the LORD (Yahweh)” i.e., one directly from LORD God (Isa. 4:2).

These four descriptions of the Messiah subdivide according to one of the most basic distinctions we can make about any person: who he *is* and what he *does*. Two of the four terms refer to his **person**—*Son* and *man*, while the other two relate to his **work**—*King* and *servant*. Intrinsic to these terms is another important distinction in the life of the Messiah: he is humbled and he is exalted, that is, both “sufferings” and “glory” will characterize his life. We see Jesus’ humility in the designations man and servant, we see his exaltation in the terms king and Son of God. Although the four Gospels are in many ways the same, they are also unique, each having its own vocabulary and style.

The Four Gospels all begin and end in a way that points out their unique purpose. The book of Matthew starts with a genealogy that presents Jesus as a King from the line of David; showing that Jesus is the Messianic fulfillment of God’s promise to David that his kingdom would never end (2 Sam. 7:16). Thus, Matthew starts with the “record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David,” and then gives the genealogy from Abraham, the one who was promised the land, and the genealogy goes through King David, who was the king and promised the kingdom in a covenant of salt with God (2 Chron. 13:5). Then Matthew ends with Jesus commanding his disciples to teach people to obey his commands, which is what subjects of the king do—obey—and also he told them he would always be with them, which makes sense because his kingdom will never end.

Mark has no genealogy, which makes sense because a servant’s genealogy is not relevant—the work he does is what matters, and servants are employed when they are ready to serve. Mark begins with John the Baptist preparing for the coming of God’s prophesied “Servant” (cf. Isa. 52:13), and then Jesus is equipped for ministry by receiving holy spirit and being tested in the desert (Mark 1:9-13), after which he begins his ministry (Mark 1:14). Mark ends suddenly. The angel told the women Jesus had been raised from the dead and they left trembling and astonished. That abrupt ending of Mark is appropriate because once Jesus had been raised from the dead the work of Jesus the Suffering Servant was over. Once Jesus arose he was now the exalted and glorified king

Luke portrays Jesus as a man, and as such it is appropriate that Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, who will prepare the people of Israel for his arrival. Then Luke records Jesus’ birth almost as if it were the birth of any other person, including his circumcision and being presented in the Temple along with sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses. However, the testimony of shepherds, Anna, and Simeon remind us that the baby was the promised Messiah. Then Luke 3 gives the human genealogy of Jesus going back to Adam, the first human. Luke ends with Jesus ending his earthly ministry and being carried up into heaven, at which point he began a totally new aspect of his ministry.

The Gospel of John begins with showing that God had a plan from the beginning (John 1:1) and that plan for salvation and redemption became flesh in Jesus Christ. John introduces Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and only the sinless Son of God was qualified to be the sacrifice for all human sin. The Gospel of John does not end with the resurrection or ascension, because as the Son of God, Jesus’ ministry continues on forever. Instead, John ends with statements about how the Gospel of John was written so that people would believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and thus receive everlasting life (John 20:31; 21:24).

Beyond the way they begin and end, the Gospels have contents that point to their unique purpose. Matthew has a number of unique characteristics that point to Christ as King. Matthew mentions the humble birth of Christ in one sentence (Matt. 1:25), but then skips forward almost two years until the Magi arrive and ask “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2). Then the Magi present the royal Son with gifts appropriate for his status as king. The phrase, “the Kingdom of Heaven” is associated with the specific reign of the Messiah on earth. It occurs more than 30 times in the Gospel of Matthew, but not once in any of the other Gospels, which use the phrase, “Kingdom of God.” The title, “Son of David,” occurs ten times in Matthew and only six times in all the other Gospels combined. There are a number of parables that are unique to Matthew, and most of them have a clear reference to the Kingdom. These include: the Darnel (Matt. 13:24-30); the Hidden Treasure (Matt. 13:44); the Pearl (Matt. 13:45); the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47); the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23-35); the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16); the Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32); the Marriage of the King’s Son (Matt. 22:1-14); and the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). Only Matthew records the “sheep and goat judgment,” when the king lets the righteous into his kingdom but excludes the unrighteous (Matt. 25).

The Gospel of Mark, which presents Christ as a servant, is short, simple, and forceful, emphasizing Christ’s works more than his words. Commentators have long noticed that Mark focuses more on what Jesus *did* than what he *said*, which makes sense because obedient action is the sign of a good servant. Mark also moves quickly from one event to another. Even the vocabulary reflects this pattern. The Greek word *eutheos* (“immediately”) occurs 40 times in Mark but only 27 times in all the other Gospels combined. That statistic is made even more vivid when one realizes that there are only 16 chapters in Mark, but 73 chapters in the other three Gospels.

A valued servant is quick to obey. E. W. Bullinger, who also saw the fourfold portrait of Christ, notes that Jesus “is addressed as ‘Lord’ in the other three Gospels 73 times,...he is addressed as such in the Gospel of Mark only twice.”[[1]](#footnote-25736) Bullinger notes that of these two uses of “Lord” that appear in the KJV, one was by a Gentile woman and was simply the title equivalent of “sir” (Mark 7:28), and one is Mark 9:24, which is not even in the earliest Greek texts, but was a later addition. So actually, Jesus is never called “Lord” in Mark by anyone who knew he was the Messiah, a clear indication of the emphasis in Mark on Jesus’ role as God’s servant. Appropriately, more than a third of Mark takes place in the last week of Jesus’ life, which places special emphasis on his obedience and the fact that he was the suffering Servant foretold in the Old Testament.

Mark also opens with the phrase that presents the “beginning” of the Good News of Jesus (Mark 1:1). That is true, because the Good News of Jesus continues to this day with Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus’ role of King, human man, and Son of God, all continue to this day, but Jesus’ role as the Servant of God ended with his death. Since Mark portrays Jesus as the Servant, it is appropriate that Jesus does not appear in Mark after his resurrection, when he is no longer the Servant, but “Lord of all.” Thus the Gospel of Mark only gives us the “beginning” of the Good News about Jesus, it does not continue with Good News about him after his resurrection.

The Gospel of Luke, which portrays Christ as a man, presents the Messiah and his relationships in a way that highlights his humanity as the Last Adam. Luke has an emphasis on both prayer and praise to God, which is appropriate for all mankind. Jesus is shown praying in Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 11:1; 22:32, 41, 44, and 23:34. Luke has four great praise hymns that are unique to Luke: the Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46-55); the Benedictus of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79); the Gloria in Excelsis of the angels (Luke 2:14), and the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32), and praise to God is mentioned in many other verses.

Luke clearly portrays Jesus’ great love for all people and describes him as a warm and loving person. Commentators note that the book of Luke portrays Jesus’ special concern for the poor, sinners, women, and the family more clearly than any other Gospel. Luke has a unique emphasis on women, and speaks of women in a way not covered in the other Gospels, for example, Elizabeth, Anna, the widow of Nain, the repentant woman (Luke 7:37-50); the women who ministered to Christ (Luke 8:2-3), the daughters of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-28), and Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Also, Luke shows Jesus sympathetically acknowledging the Gentiles. The parables that are unique to Luke emphasize human traits such as love for fellow man (and the importance of an individual), wisdom, and foolishness. Parables unique to Luke include: the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-42); the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37); the Persistent Friend (Luke 11:5-8); the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21); the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10); the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32); the Wise Manager (Luke 16:1-12); the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31); the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8); the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14).

The Gospel of John, which portrays Christ as the Son of God, starts out by saying that God, in the beginning, had a plan, purpose, or wisdom (the *logos*) that became flesh, that is, the Son “comes from” the Father. This is a very short genealogy: the Father had a Son, an *only begotten* Son, and since Jesus’ father is God, any portrayal of his earthly birth would only take emphasis away from the true Father. Jesus’ intimacy with his Father is uniquely portrayed in John. For example, the word “father” occurs as many times in John as in all the other Gospels combined.

The narrator writes the Gospel of John from the standpoint that Jesus is already exalted and in heaven, something both unique to John and appropriate to his status as the Son of God (cf. commentary on John 3:13). Theologians have long noticed that John is different from the other Gospels and truly unique. This fits with our expectations because, as “the only begotten Son of God,” Jesus is truly unique.

John is also unique from the standpoint of what it leaves out. For example, there is no temptation in the wilderness. Kings, servants, and humans need to demonstrate their qualifications and be proven for the job they do, but as the Son of God, Jesus is qualified to be the Messiah without being tempted first. Similarly, there is no record of the event called “the Transfiguration,” because, as we have already said, John sees Jesus from the perspective of already being risen and in glory, not the perspective of preparing for his glory. Also, Jesus is called by the messianic title, the “Son of David” in every Gospel except John. As a king, servant, and man, Jesus was indeed the Son of David. But the emphasis in John, that Jesus was the Son of God, is more important and needs more emphasis than pointing out that Jesus was also “the Son of David.”

It should catch our attention that when the Messiah does a miracle in his role as King, Servant, or Man, the act is called a “miracle” (*dunamis*). The Greek word *dunamis* (miracle; power) occurs almost 40 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but it does not occur at all in John. In contrast to the other Gospels, when Jesus does a miracle in the Gospel of John, the work is called a “sign” (*simeion*). A “sign” is something that gives information and points to something else. For example, a road sign with a curved line on it points out that there is a curve in the road ahead. The eight “signs” in John that are clearly miracles are called “signs” because they point to Jesus as the Son of God. Thus, Jesus could say, “though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you will come to know and continue to know that the Father is in *union with* me, and I am in *union with* the Father” (John 10:38); and “Keep on believing me, that I am in *union with* the Father and the Father in *union with* me, or else keep believing me because of the works themselves” (John 14:11). The eight miracle signs in John are:

1. Water to Wine (John 2:1-11; called a sign in v. 11)
2. The Ruler’s Son Healed (John 4:46-54; called a sign in 48, 54)
3. Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-47; not specifically called a sign, but in John 6:2 Jesus’ healing the sick was called a sign)
4. Feeding the 5,000 (John 6:1-14; called a sign in 14)
5. Walking on the Sea (John 6:17-21; not specifically called a sign, but obviously included in the plural “signs” in John 6:26)
6. Man Born Blind (John 9:1-39; called a sign in 16)
7. Lazarus Raised From the Dead (John 11:1-45; called a sign by the Jews in John 11:47, and called a sign in John 12:18)
8. Multitude of Fish (John 21:1-11; Although the word “sign” is not used in John 21, the sign of the fish occurs immediately after John 20:30-31, which speak of “these” signs that are written, and thus certainly includes the sign that follows immediately afterward)

Besides these specifically mentioned signs, there are other places in John that refer to signs Jesus was doing, such as John 2:23; 3:2; 7:31, and 12:37. The signs that Jesus was doing show the prejudice and spiritual blindness of the Jews, who a number of times asked Jesus to show them a sign of who he was (John 2:18; 6:30).

The fourfold portrait of Christ given by the Four Gospels is good evidence they are the God-breathed Word of God, and not just the writing and memories of four men. There is no way the four different writers could have collaborated on their individual Gospels and produced this remarkable fourfold portrait of Christ. Like all the different writers of the Bible, they each wrote independently of one another, separated by both time and space. They could not have agreed upon what to include together and what to emphasize individually such that the wonderful fourfold portrait of Christ that was foretold in the Old Testament was laid out in the Four Gospels. The Four Gospels, like the rest of the Bible, are the God-breathed Word.

**“The Son of God.”** This phrase, which is only two words in the Greek text, is missing from some early and important manuscripts. The variety of manuscripts that do not have the phrase is such that many scholars have concluded that differences in the manuscripts are not due to an accidental deletion that was simply recopied but was a deliberate change. That fact has not ended the debate; it has just shifted the question. Is it more likely that the phrase was original, but adoptionist scribes (those who say Jesus “became” the Son at his baptism) deleted it to add support for their position; or is it more likely that the phrase was not original, but scribes added it, following their general tendency to expand titles? At this point, there is no conclusive evidence for either position. Since the adoptionist view is erroneous, whether the phrase “Son of God” was added to simply expand the title of Jesus Christ, or whether it is original, the fact remains that Jesus was the Son of God from his conception, so we left the phrase in.

Mar 1:2

**“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet.”** The quotation is from both Malachi 3:1 and the book of Isaiah 40:3. This is not “a mistake” or “error,” as some people claim, as if Mark thought the whole quotation was from Isaiah. Mark 1:2-3 are run together as if they were one quotation, not two. By just mentioning the part quoted from Isaiah, Mark is using a literary device that puts the emphasis of the extended quotation on the part that Isaiah wrote, which says what we are to do in light of the Lord’s coming. Hendriksen writes: “Mark tells us that he is going to quote from Isaiah. He does exactly that, though not immediately.”[[2]](#footnote-24358) Had Mark quoted only Isaiah, we would be left knowing only that a “voice” was crying in the wilderness. By quoting Malachi before Isaiah, we know to whom the “voice” belongs: to none other than the messenger who will begin to prepare the way of the Lord.

The quotation from Malachi has been adapted to fit the Messiah. A more literal quotation of the Hebrew of Malachi 3:1 would be, “Behold, I [Yahweh] am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way [road] before me.” In Mark, the verse has been modified so that the messenger prepares the road for the Messiah. Hence here in Mark the verse means, “Look!, I am sending my [Yahweh’s] messenger before your [the Messiah’s] face, who will prepare your [the Messiah’s] way.

This is not the only instance where two passages in the OT are quoted, but only one prophet is cited. For example, Matthew 27:9-10 come from Zechariah and Jeremiah, but only Jeremiah is quoted. This same pattern occurs in the OT in 2 Chronicles 36:21, which says it quotes Jeremiah, but actually quotes both Jeremiah and Leviticus. When God quotes two sources, but only gives credit to one, He is telling us where to place the emphasis in what he is quoting so there is no guesswork about it.

In light of the fact that the extended quotation comes from Malachi and then Isaiah, it is easy to see why copyists would change “Isaiah the prophet” to “in the prophets.” The earliest texts from both the Alexandrian and Western text families have Isaiah the prophet, and the change to “the prophets” is “an obvious correction.”[[3]](#footnote-20936)

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“prepare the road.”** See commentary on Mark 1:3.

Mar 1:3

**“A voice of one calling out in the desert, ‘Make the road ready for Lord! Make the paths straight for him!’”** This quotation is from Isaiah 40:3 in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), and it is quoted here in Mark 1:3 and also in Matthew 3:3 and Luke 3:4.

[For more information on the Septuagint and the original NT texts being in Greek, see commentary on Luke 3:4.]

**“make the road ready.”** The word “road” is *hodos* (#3598 ὁδός ). Like the English word “way,” it can refer to a road or path, or it can refer to a specific way of doing things. Many times, such as here, its primary meaning is “road,” and it is helpful to translate it that way.

In the Old Testament times (this verse is quoted from Isaiah, roughly 750 BC), there was not much attention paid to the condition of the roads in a country. Even in Roman times, usually only the very important central roadways, and the roads in cities, got any real attention. Nobody owned the roads, and nobody profited from spending time repairing them. It was just repeated use that made the terrain into dirt paths, some wider than others, that then were referred to as roads. Books on the customs of the Bible lands (especially those from the 1800s or earlier) are replete with stories of the horrors of traveling on roads. They were full of pits, or were rocky, or had overhanging foliage that could knock a rider off the donkey, horse, or camel he or she was riding. They were dark at night and slippery when wet or frozen. They often ascended or descended quickly, and became very dangerous if the conditions were less than ideal. Often thornbushes grew near the road such that unwary travelers were scratched or had their clothing torn. Added to all this was that there were no road signs to tell travelers where they were, or what road to take if they came to a crossroads. This caused a lot of anxiety to travelers, who did not want to waste time going the wrong way, and could be quite dangerous if the road went to an area that was inhabited by robbers. When Jesus said, “I am the road,” (usually translated, “I am the way”), he was being clear that if a person did not want to get lost trying to get to God, that Jesus was the road to travel on.

When a king (or sometimes a high official) was going to go on a journey, he would send out messengers before he traveled. They would announce to the farmers and villagers who lived close to the road to take the time to go out and prepare it to make the king’s trip easier. The villagers would clear the rock and bushes, fill in ruts and pits, and generally make the road safer and easier to travel (cf. Isa. 62:10). “Make his paths straight” does not refer to taking winding sections of the road and rerouting them, although that might have been done on a small scale if the road went around something that was no longer an obstacle. The word “straight” can also mean “level,” and in this context refers to filling up the pits and holes that developed in the road so it was level and easy to ride on.

[For more on roads and the danger of travel in the ancient world, see commentary on 2 Cor. 11:26.]

Mar 1:4

**“John came.”** The Bible does not tell us how long before Jesus was baptized and started his ministry that John started his ministry. It could have been months or a few years. John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26), and for a period of time, both John and Jesus were ministering separately and were both baptizing people (John 3:22-23). Then John was thrown in prison and executed.

There is a textual variation in this verse concerning whether or not *John came baptizing* or *John the Baptizer came*. Some versions read, “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness” (ESV); while others read, “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,” (NRSV). The difference depends on the addition or deletion of the single letter for the article *ho*, (#3588 ὁ), meaning “the.” It is most likely, however, that the *ho* is not original and the preferred reading is “John came baptizing.” The reason for this is that John is frequently elsewhere called John the *Baptist*, but never John the *Baptizer*. This lends credence to viewing the participle “baptizing” as descriptive of John’s action and not a title.[[4]](#footnote-23492)

**“baptizing...baptism.”** Although there is a heated debate about it, Scripture is not clear as to whether John, Jesus, and the apostles immersed people in water or poured water onto them. There are four Greek words in the New Testament associated with baptism, one verb and three nouns. Two of them occur here in Mark 1:4: the verb *baptizō* (#907 βαπτίζω), from which the nouns derive, and the noun *baptisma* (#908 βάπτισμα). The verb *baptizō* is a common word found in many Greek writings and it means to submerge, immerse, dip, dip repeatedly, or soak. It was used for washing things, for cleansing them either by immersion or dipping, and for cleaning the body by bathing, which did not necessarily mean immersion. The word *baptizō* was also used metaphorically for being overcome or overwhelmed. As the ritual of baptism developed, *baptizō* was used of the immersion in water that took place in baptism ceremonies and it was also the word that was used for affusion, or baptism by pouring water.

The noun *baptisma* (“baptism”) is found only in the New Testament and ecclesiastical literature that was written after the New Testament. *Baptisma* refers to the baptism that John and Jesus did, and also to Christian baptism. Like the verb *baptizō*, it was also used figuratively for afflictions that were overwhelming, including martyrdom (Mark 10:38). Another noun used for baptism is *baptismos* (#909 βαπτισμός), and it means to wash or to purify by washing (Mark 7:4). It was also used for the various Jewish washings required by the Mosaic Law (Heb. 6:2; 9:10) and for Christian baptism.

The third noun associated with baptism is *baptistēs* (#910 βαπτιστής), and it means “baptizer” or “one who baptizes” (Matt. 3:1). In the New Testament it always refers to John the “Baptist,” which would be clearer if the phrase was translated “John the Baptizer.”

Although most people think of “baptism” as being in water, the word “baptism” has no reference to what the person is baptized in. Besides water, baptism in other religions has been known to occur in wine, oil, honey, blood, and even cow’s urine.[[5]](#footnote-25287) John the Baptist spoke of two different baptisms, water and spirit. He said, “I baptized you in water, but he [the Messiah] will baptize you with holy spirit” (Mark 1:8).

Debates have raged through the centuries about the “right” way to water baptize: by immersion, affusion (affusion, sometimes called infusion, is the practice of pouring water on the head of the person being baptized), or aspersion (sprinkling). These debates sometimes center on the meaning of the Greek words for baptism and whether or not they demand immersion, but the historical practice of administering water baptism is also considered. Too many times people have drawn conclusions about the meaning of a word, for example, *baptizō*, by just looking it up in a lexicon and taking that definition as the “true meaning” of the word. But to know the full range of meaning of any biblical word we must discover the different ways the people who lived in the biblical culture used it. The definitions given in lexicons are often not complete, and they can occasionally give erroneous or misleading information, especially if the lexicon is an older one. Archaeologists and historians are constantly discovering ancient documents that expand our understanding of the meaning of ancient words. For example, Thayer’s lexicon, which is commonly used but was written in 1896, gives the following definitions for *baptizō*: to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge; to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water; to wash oneself, bathe.[[6]](#footnote-17585) Thus, from reading *Thayer’s,* a person might conclude that baptism has to be by immersion. However, *baptizō* is the word that is consistently used of “baptism” with holy spirit (cf. Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; 11:16), and every reference to baptism in the spirit, including the Old Testament prophecies about it, shows that the spirit is “poured out” upon us (Isa. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29; Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45; Titus 3:6). So the Bible itself shows us that *baptizō*, “baptism” can refer to baptism by pouring water as well as immersion.

John and Jesus baptized in the Jordan River, and could well have baptized in other places as well because there were baptism sites all over Israel. The baptisms they performed were most likely by immersion because that would follow the pattern of the immersion rituals that were already being performed by the Jews. But since many people could not swim and may have been afraid of deep flowing water, there is no reason John could not have poured water onto people in the same way the Bible says the holy spirit was to be “poured out.” The Greek vocabulary about baptism does not forbid pouring. Furthermore, although immersion was the general practice of the Jews in their baptism rituals, there is very good evidence that affusion (baptism by pouring the water on the person) was practiced very early in the Church. For example, it is mentioned in the Didache, which could have even been written as early as in the latter years of the first century. But how would pouring the water have started? We cannot conclusively prove it did not start with John or Jesus themselves and then been continued by the apostles.

It is also important to notice that early Christian art depicts baptism by pouring, not immersion. T. M. Lindsay writes,“…if the witness of the earliest pictorial representations be collected, then we must infer that affusion was the usual method [of baptism] and that immersion was exceptional; for the pictorial representations, almost without exception, display baptism performed by affusion; i.e., the recipient is seen standing in water while the minister pours water on the head.”[[7]](#footnote-20855) The early Christians baptized by pouring water, and that practice could have started with John, Jesus, or the apostles, but in any case, it was a practice that started very early, was the dominant way of baptizing for centuries, and has continued among some Christians to this day. It is very likely that at least some of the baptisms mentioned in Scripture were by pouring and not immersion (cf. Acts 8:38; 9:18; 16:33).

We have to be honest about the fact that just as the Bible does not describe any “right way” to have a Christian meeting, it does not describe a “right way” to baptize. Perhaps that is because baptism was a symbol: water was always a symbol. Water baptism never actually conferred spiritual cleanness in the Old Testament, and in New Testament times it never actually conferred salvation or any other spiritual grace. All the various washings in the Law were symbolic and pointed to the ultimate baptism, the baptism in the holy spirit.

John the Baptist, who was both a priest and a prophet, clearly pointed to baptism in the holy spirit being greater than his water baptism. He said that in contrast to his baptism in water, the Messiah would “baptize” in the spirit. Another thing that points to the symbolic nature of water rituals is that God did not give any commandments about washing or cleansing in water before the Mosaic Law, and that was given to Israel by God about 1450 BC. Considering Adam was created around 4000 BC, it is hard to imagine that water is necessary for spiritual cleansing, but God never mentioned it for the first 2500 years of human existence.

Water can remove physical uncleanness, but it cannot remove mental and spiritual uncleanness. But a person’s willingness to be symbolically baptized in water showed their faith that God could and would make them clean in His sight, and that is the goal: to be pleasing to God and clean in His sight.

**“a baptism *that was a sign* of repentance.”** The Greek word translated “repentance” is, *metanoia* (#3341 μετάνοια), and it means to change one’s mind, and therefore life and lifestyle. It is ceasing thinking and doing things that are contrary to God, and instead, thinking and behaving in a way that is in obedience to God.

**“repentance”** is in the genitive case, so the literal translation is: “baptism of repentance.” Daniel Wallace points out that the genitive is so ambiguous that it can have many meanings, and therefore he says, “it may well be best to be non-committal: ‘baptism that is somehow related to repentance.’”[[8]](#footnote-16923) While Wallace’s statement is accurate, it is unsatisfying. It leaves us with the same problem we started with, which is that we do not know the meaning of the phrase. We should be able to draw a conclusion about the meaning of the genitive from the scope of Scripture. Of course, the denominations vary greatly in their interpretation of the scope of Scripture, and the scholars do also. On one extreme, for example, is the assertion that the genitive is one of production, implying the meaning to be “a baptism that produces repentance.” We assert that the baptism did not produce the repentance, or “complete” it in any way, except perhaps cementing in the mind of the person who had been baptized that since he had made a public declaration before God and people, he better honor his vow and live a godly lifestyle.

In his list of possible interpretations, Wallace himself gives what may be the best way to understand and translate this verse and the concept behind it: “baptism that symbolized repentance.” In the same way that animal sacrifice was a symbol that pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, water baptism and washing rituals were part of the Old Testament and pointed to and symbolized the coming of the greater baptism, which was baptism with holy spirit. Many Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the spirit, which they universally said would be poured out from heaven (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10). Then, John the Baptist was the first person we know of to refer to that pouring out as “baptism,” and then Jesus also referred to the pouring out of the holy spirit upon people as a “baptism” in the holy spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5).

A number of translators and scholars have seen that the genitive in this sentence is a genitive of relation, and the relation being best expressed is that when a person repents before God, he demonstrates that repentance by a public ceremony of baptism. Thus the outward act of water baptism symbolized the inner act of going from the old to the new, or from death to life, in the heart. C. S. Mann writes: “An alternative rendering of this Semitism would be, ‘A baptism which symbolized repentance.’”[[9]](#footnote-13079) F. Grant writes: “This baptism was the symbol of repentance.”[[10]](#footnote-20183) Walter Wessel writes: “the baptism indicated the repentance had already occurred or was being accompanied by it.”[[11]](#footnote-31888) Ann Nyland translates the last part of Mark 1:4 as: “He [John] preached that people should be baptized as a symbol that they had changed their minds, and this resulted in their sins being canceled,”[[12]](#footnote-26746) Charles Williams translates: “a baptism conditioned on repentance.”[[13]](#footnote-20367) J. B. Phillips translates the last part of the verse: John came... “proclaiming baptism as the mark of a complete change of heart and of the forgiveness of sins.”[[14]](#footnote-23627)

**“repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”** The Greek word *eis* (for) has many meanings, primarily purpose or result. The translation in most versions, “for,” is somewhat ambiguous although accurate. A major theme in the Bible is that if a person will repent he will be forgiven. Over and over God tells people that if they will humble themselves and come to Him for forgiveness, he will indeed forgive them (1 John 1:9 is very clear, but also see such verses as: Neh. 9:17; Ps. 32:5; 103:11-13; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 5:1; 36:3; Luke 6:37). There is no place where God says something such as: “If you confess your sin I will consider forgiving you.”

The *eis* can be translated “because,” a less frequent but very valid meaning of *eis*.[[15]](#footnote-25503) In that case, people were baptized as a symbol because their sins had been forgiven. However, that is actually just another way of understanding the *eis* as a result clause—it would be saying the people were baptized because their repentance led to remission. That concept can be worded as a result clause, as we have in the REV: “baptism *that was a sign* of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” In other words, the people were baptized as a symbol, or sign, that they had repented, a repentance which had, as always, resulted in the remission of their sin.

The people came to John to be baptized so they could enter the Kingdom of God. As they stood by John they confessed their sins and repented. That confession and repentance resulted in their sins being forgiven (remitted), and John baptized them as a symbol of that repentance and forgiveness. Ann Nyland translates the phrase: “baptized as a symbol that they had changed their minds, and this resulted in their sins being canceled.”[[16]](#footnote-30764)

Mar 1:5

**“the whole region of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem**.” A good example of oriental hyperbole (exaggeration). Not everyone went to John to be baptized, but a great many did. The Greek reads “Jerusalemites,” but “all the people of Jerusalem” is clearer in English.

**“openly confessing their sins.”** See commentary on Matthew 3:6.

Mar 1:7

**“the strap.”** This could be a collective singular for “straps,” but perhaps not, so it is better to keep the singular.

**“I am not *even* worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals.”** That John would compare himself to Jesus in this way is very important in showing the humble and obedient heart of John, who was God’s loyal servant, and John’s comparison occurs in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16, and John 1:27). Matthew is slightly different but the heart is the same.

Mar 1:8

**“with holy spirit.”** This is the gift of holy spirit. The Messiah will baptize every person with either the gift of holy spirit or the fire of God’s judgment (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). The record here in Mark is different than the records in Matthew and Luke. Matthew and Luke focus on sinners (Pharisees, Sadducees, tax collectors, etc., who need to repent or they will be “baptized with fire,” (be thrown into the Lake of Fire after the Judgment). In contrast, Mark focuses on the people of Judea and Jerusalem who were humble and were making the journey to see John the Baptist and accept his baptism of repentance and confess their sins. Those humble people were not in danger of the Lake of Fire, so it is not mentioned in the Gospel of Mark. The book of Acts records that Jesus baptizes in holy spirit (Acts 2:33).

[For more information on the phrase “holy spirit or fire,” see commentary on Luke 3:16. For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’” For more information on the difference between God, the Holy Spirit, and God’s gift to people, the holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 1:9

**“Jesus came.”** The record of Jesus’ baptism is in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; and is mentioned in John 1:31-34.

Mar 1:10

**“immediately as he was stepping up.”** The words in many versions, “coming up out of the water,” do not make it clear that the Greek text of Matthew and Mark do not refer to Jesus breaking the surface of the water of the Jordan, but rather to him walking out of the water, up the bank, and away from the river after the baptism was completed. The Greek text of Mark reads, *anabainōn ek tou hudatos* (ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος), “coming up out of the water,” where the word “ek” means “out of,” in the sense that he was getting “out of” the water, not standing in it. The water was below the level of the bank, as it is in all rivers, so in order to get out of the water, Jesus had to “come up” out of the Jordan. We need to become clear about the fact that someone standing waist-deep in water is not “out of” the water, but very much in it. However, the text says that Jesus was coming “out of” the water.

The Gospel of Matthew makes the action of Jesus crystal clear, especially when combined with Mark. Matthew 3:16 reads, *anebē apo tou hudatos* (ἀνέβη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος), “he came up away from the water.” This is the same basic vocabulary as Mark but inflected differently, except Matthew uses the preposition *apo*, “away from,” not *ek*, “out of.” Thus while Mark says Jesus was coming “out of” the water, Matthew emphasized that he was moving “away from” it, walking up the bank and away from the Jordan River.

The Greek word *anabainō* (#305 ἀναβαίνω) means “to go up,” “to come up,” and so saying, like many English versions, that Jesus “was coming up” out of the water is a very literal translation, and the REV could have used the translation “coming up from” in Mark, and “coming away from,” in Matthew. However, these translations are too often misinterpreted to mean that Jesus was still in the Jordan River with John when the heavens opened, so given the context, saying he “was stepping up” out of the water is a very acceptable translation, especially in light of the fact that it exactly describes what he was doing. It is also the translation preferred by Hendriksen.[[17]](#footnote-11898) The noted commentator R. C. H. Lenski writes:

“The descent of the Spirit occurred after the baptism had been completed, while Jesus was walking up onto the bank of the river. We should not picture it as the artists do, as though it occurred while Jesus was being baptized or while he was standing knee-deep in the water. Matthew 3:16 has *apo*, Jesus went away from the water; Mark has *ek*...Jesus stepped out of (*ek*) the water onto the bank and walked away from (*apo*) the water up the bank.”[[18]](#footnote-21012)

But why is it important to know that John’s baptism was finished and Jesus was walking away on the bank of the river? After being baptized by John, Jesus was truly ready to start his own ministry as the Messiah apart from the ministry of John or anyone else. By making it clear that the baptism of John was over and Jesus had left John, we can clearly see that the heavenly vision and voice were not connected with John, but were specifically and individually to Jesus.[[19]](#footnote-18348) It is appropriate that God would put holy spirit upon Jesus just as he started off to do his own ministry, and not as he was standing in the water with John, as if the two ministries were somehow related. The work of the Messiah could only have been done by the one man, the true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Another time people stepped up and out of the Jordan was in Acts 8:38-39 when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts makes the getting into and out of the water of the Jordan River a little more clear because it speaks of them both getting in the water and coming back up from it. We can mentally picture them as they “went down into the water,” getting out of the chariot, walking down the bank into the water, and then Philip baptizing the eunuch. Then Acts 8:39 says they “came up out of the water” (“stepped up out of the water;” REV) coming up the bank and back toward the chariot, at which point Philip was miraculously transported away from there to Azotus (the Ashdod of the OT).

[For more, see commentaries on Matt. 3:16 and Acts 8:39.]

**“he saw...the spirit descending.”** In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the “he saw” can refer to Jesus or John, the pronouns are unclear. But in any case, this was an event visible to anyone there and John did actually see it (John 1:32).

**“upon him.”** The Greek manuscripts are divided about the reading of the preposition, some having *epi*, “upon,” and some having *eis*, “to, into, toward.” The Old Testament tradition is more firmly based on the spirit coming “upon” people, and that is likely the tradition that would be continued here.

Mar 1:11

**“You are my beloved Son.”** The verb in this phrase, translated “are,” is in the present tense and is ontological: it is declaring who Jesus is. The second phrase is God declaring that He is pleased with Jesus, which makes perfect sense because Jesus had prepared himself through his life and now was ready to step into his public ministry.

Some people have tried to say that Jesus somehow “became” the Son when he received holy spirit, but that argument fails on a number of points. Grammatically it fails because to state that Jesus became the Son at his baptism, the text should say, “You have become my Son.” God uses the present tense verb in 1:11, and He uses the present tense verb again at the Transfiguration, when He says, “This is my beloved Son” (Mark 9:7). Both statements are ontological, stating a fact. There is no evidence that either is announcing a change that had occurred.

It also fails because Jesus had been called the “Son” before his baptism, based on his birth and that God was his Father (cf. Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:32, 35; John 1:14). It also fails because what happened at the Baptism was that Jesus received the gift of holy spirit, but there is no other change than that recorded about him. However, Moses, Joshua, and the prophets of the Old Testament all had the gift of holy spirit put upon them, and there is no evidence that this act then made them “Sons” of God.

Mar 1:12

**“And immediately.”** The record of Jesus’ being tempted in the desert is in Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; and Luke 4:1-13.

**“the spirit.”** Jesus had just received the gift of holy spirit, and now via that spirit He was commanded to go into the desert.

[For more on the Holy Spirit and holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 1:13

**“being tempted.”** The Bible does not record what all these temptations were, but they certainly included hunger and danger from wild animals. The Bible records that at the end of the 40 days, the Devil himself came and tempted Jesus (Matt. 4:3). We can see part of the reason for the temptations in the fact that they are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but not John. As the king and representative of the people (in Matthew), as the servant of God (in Mark), and as the perfect human and second Adam (in Luke), Jesus had to show that a man could stand up to the temptations of life and of the Devil. As the Son of God (in John) there was no point in recording his temptation; he did not need to resist temptation to show who he was and what he could do. As the Word in the flesh, he had a higher calling—to make known his Father to the world.

[For information on the reason for four Gospels, see commentary on Mark 1:1, “the good news of Jesus Christ.”]

The fact that Jesus was tempted in the desert should prove once and for all that the earth is a war zone and there is an ongoing battle between Good and Evil. God does not tempt (James 1:13), yet life is full of temptations. The world we live in is under the control of the Devil (1 John 5:19) and that should be obvious to us because of the evil that is all around us, which cannot be from our loving God. God did not tempt Jesus in the desert, the Devil did.

What a great victory Jesus had for himself and humankind, and what a contrast to Adam and Eve. Adam was in the best of circumstances in the Garden of Eden, yet he chose to abandon God’s command, following his own fleshly desires instead. In contrast, Jesus was in the worst of earth’s circumstances yet held fast to the humble service and obedience due his Father, God. In the experience of those two men, Scripture lays before us the two paths available to us: the path of Adam and the path of the Second Adam, and it is our choice which one to follow. We can be like the first Adam and ignore God’s commands and give in to our flesh, or we can be like the Second Adam and be willing to devote ourselves to selfless service and believe and follow the Word of God and not our own desires and feelings. The choice is ours to make, but the consequences are not ours to pick. The consequences of obedience are everlasting life and rewards. The consequences of disobedience can include death in the Lake of Fire. May we all have the wisdom and strength to choose the path of Christ.

[For more on the war between God and the Devil that is going on in the world, see commentary on Luke 4:6.]

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς ). The term means “Adversary,” and it was borrowed from the Aramaic, *Satana* (סָטָנָא) which originally referred to one who laid in ambush [as an adversary], and then became used as a proper name meaning “Adversary.”[[20]](#footnote-16640) The word “satan” means “adversary” in all the biblical languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, although sometimes it is used just as “an adversary,” and sometimes, especially with the article, it is used as an appellative, a name, for the Devil.

Being an adversary to God and the things of God is a major part of the Devil’s character and strategy. “Satan” can refer to the direct work of the Devil as in Job 1, or it can refer to indirect work as in Matthew 16:23 when Jesus called Peter “Satan.” Usually, the word “Satan” places the emphasis on the indirect work of the Devil. As the great adversary of the true God, the Adversary is the indirect cause of people’s problems by way of situations or circumstances or other people, which he arranges and controls. He is the influence of these situations, circumstances, and people. It has been generally unhelpful that *satanas* has been transliterated as “Satan” rather than translated as “Adversary.” Anyone reading Hebrew or Greek knew what the word meant, but almost no Christian knows that “Satan” is not just a name, it is a word that became used as a name, and its meaning, Adversary, is important.

[For information on the names of the Devil and their meanings, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil”.]

**“were ministering to him.”** The Greek verb is *diakoneō (*#1247 διακονέω), and it is in the imperfect tense, thus indicating an action in the past that occurred over a period of time. The exact nature of this ministering is not described, but especially after Satan left it may have involved bringing Jesus food and serving him.

Although a number of commentators state that they believe that Satan had already left Jesus’ presence when the angels came, that does not seem to be the sense of the Greek text or a simple reading of the verse itself. The flow of the verse clearly seems to indicate that the angels were with him at times while he was in the desert, just as the wild animals were. If we read the verse as it stands, the wild animals were certainly with Jesus during his time in the desert, and the verse simply continues on and says that the angels were ministering to him, as if they also were there at times during his temptation in the desert. Jesus’ desert experience would have been like life: the hardships of life (the desert), the presence of physical enemies (the wild animals), the hordes of Satan (including Satan himself), and God’s angels, all around one man who needed to resist temptation and walk in wisdom and power. There is no reason to believe that the presence of angels somehow meant that Jesus was not really tempted. For one thing, it is unlikely that the angels were there all the time, any more than he was constantly surrounded by wild animals. They would likely come and go. Also, the angels did not keep Jesus from being tempted, but their presence helped remind Jesus how much was at stake in his living a sinless life.

God, who is the Spirit, led Jesus into the desert, but He did that via the gift of holy spirit that had just come upon Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:16; 4:1; Luke 4:1). The Gospel of Mark is even more forceful, saying that the spirit “drove” Jesus into the desert (Mark 1:12). But why? Why the need to be in the desert? It surely makes a parallel between Jesus in the desert and Moses and Israel in the desert. Jesus was 40 days in the desert fasting just as Moses was 40 days fasting on Mount Sinai (Moses was there twice: Exod. 24:18; 34:28), and Israel was 40 years in the desert. There was an angel of the Lord in the desert who helped Israel in its wanderings (Exod. 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2) and so too Jesus had angelic support. It was Moses’ and Israel’s disobedience in the desert that led to the death of a generation of Israelites, the deaths of Israel’s great leaders, and by dividing the Twelve Tribes to both sides of the Jordan River, put an end to the vision of a united Israel in the Promised Land. In contrast, Jesus’ obedience in the wilderness, and his resisting physical, mental, and spiritual temptation, contributed to his being able to restore and give life to the nation of Israel once again.

Mar 1:14

**“After John was arrested.”** John was arrested between Passover and Pentecost. It was after John the Baptist was arrested (Matt. 4:12, 17; Mark 1:14) that Jesus started preaching and telling people to repent because the Kingdom of Heaven (also called the Kingdom of God) had drawn near (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15).

[For more information on the chronology, see the REV commentary on Matt. 4:12.]

**“good news of God.”** The words “of the kingdom” were added by copyists, to conform this verse to many others that appear in the Four Gospels. This is the only use of “Good News of God” in the Gospels, and from the context, it is clear that it does indeed refer to the Good News of the Kingdom.

**“Jesus came into Galilee.”** In this context, the Word saying, “Jesus came into Galilee” refers to his “coming” as the fulfillment of a divine call to preach the Good News there. In this context, “came” (or the Greek could also be translated “went”) does not seem to refer as much to a change in physical location, (although it does do that) as to the fact that Jesus is following the leading of the spirit. He had been in Galilee before this. After Jesus had been baptized by John and spent 40 days in the wilderness, he met disciples (John 1:35-51) and then returned to Galilee for a wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) then went to Capernaum (John 2:12), and even went back to Jerusalem for Passover (John 3).

John the Baptist said one would come who would baptize in holy spirit (Mark 1:7-8). Jesus came from Nazareth to John (Mark 1:9). Jesus came into Galilee (Mark 1:14). It is likely that in this context Jesus was coming up from Jerusalem to Galilee.

Mar 1:15

**“The time has been fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe the good news.”** What Jesus said here in Mark 1:15 is also stated with slightly different wording in the parallel passage, Matthew 4:17. Matthew and Mark do not contradict, but instead, they reveal some of the different ways that Jesus spoke his message. Jesus, like prophets of both the Old and New Testament, taught that the Day of the Lord was near, and like those prophets, he said it in many different ways. Sometimes he said that the “Kingdom” was near, referring to the Kingdom he would set up immediately after the Great Tribulation. Sometimes he spoke of his return, which immediately precedes the Battle of Armageddon and then the Kingdom of God being set up on earth. Also, Jesus taught his disciples to teach the same message that he was (Matt. 10:7; Luke 9:2). The one major difference between the prophecies of Jesus Christ and those of the other Old and New Testament writers is that Jesus defined the word “near” more specifically when he said in several different ways that the people of the generation in which he lived would see his Second Coming and the Kingdom of God come in power.

There is no indication in the Bible or in the history of the early church that his followers misunderstood what he meant, so we should not either. But the obvious problem with Jesus’ teaching that the Kingdom is “near” is that it has been almost 2,000 years since he taught that, and the Kingdom has not come, not at least in the full sense in which the people expected it. The Greek word translated “near” is *engizō* (#1448 ἐγγίζω) and it is quite common, occurring more than 40 times in the New Testament. *Engizō* can refer to either near in time, or near in location. The people John and Jesus spoke to knew what “near” meant, and reacted with predictable enthusiasm, just as we today would be excited if we knew that Jesus’ return was near.

Although many conservative commentators say that the word “near” just refers to the fact that the Kingdom was “imminent,” i.e., that it could come at any time, that explanation is contrived. As was stated above, the word “near” was a common word and means “near, close at hand;” it does not mean “imminent” and is not used that way in other contexts in the New Testament. Furthermore, just reading the records in the Bible shows us that the people took what John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus said at face value. Jesus’ audience knew the Old Testament prophecies and knew that if the Kingdom was near, then all the Kingdom prophecies—such as those that said the Messiah would rule justly, there would be peace, safety, and an abundance of food—were close too, and so naturally they got excited.

In contrast to “near” (i.e., close at hand), the coming of the Messiah had been “imminent” (“it could happen any time”) for centuries. If all John, Jesus, and the other New Testament writers were saying was that the Kingdom could happen any time, the people who heard that message would not have gotten excited about it—there would have been nothing revolutionary about that message. The teaching of John and Jesus that the kingdom was near was a powerful message and also in agreement with the many other ways Jesus spoke about the Kingdom being close at hand (cf. Matt. 16:28).

Very solid evidence that when Jesus said “near” he did not mean “imminent” (i.e., it can happen at any time) comes from reading and understanding Mark 1:15 itself. Mark does not have the simple statement we find in Matthew, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Mark adds that Jesus prefaced his statement with these important words: “The time is fulfilled.”

The Greek word translated “time” is *kairos* (#2540 καιρός) and it refers to a measure of time (a limited period of time) or a fixed and definite time, an opportune time, the right time. Also, the Greek word translated “fulfilled” is *plēroō* (#4137 πληρόω) and in reference to time, it means to complete a period of time; to reach the end of a period of time. Jesus did not only say the Kingdom was near, he also said that the period of time that needed to be fulfilled before the Messianic Kingdom could come to earth had now been fulfilled, completed. Jesus recognized that certain things had to occur (or a certain time had to be completed) before the Kingdom could come—and he said that that necessary time had now been completed and thus the Kingdom was at hand.

Another solid piece of evidence that the word “near” does not mean “imminent” is that God could have sent the Messiah any time He deemed fit, so in that sense, the coming of the Messiah was always “imminent.” So if “near” meant “imminent,” then from Genesis onward the End Times should have always been spoken of as being “near” or “imminent.” But that is not the case. From Genesis to perhaps the 800s BC, a period of more than 3,000 years, God indicated that the Day of the Lord, which included the Tribulation, Armageddon, Jesus’ Second Coming, and the resurrection of the dead, was not near, but was far away. For example, Job, who lived about 2,000 BC, stated that “a man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no more they will not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep.” (Job 14:12). Similarly, Baalam (c. 1450 BC) said “I see him [the Messiah], but not now. I behold him, but not near” (Num. 24:17). Ecclesiastes (c. 950 BC) says that the days a person will be in the grave will be “many” (Eccl. 11:8) and that people who die go to their “age-long home,” meaning the grave (Eccl. 12:5). Only perhaps in the 800s BC, and certainly in the 700s BC, did God start saying through His prophets that the Day of the Lord was “near” (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Isa. 13:6; 29:17; 46:13; 51:5; 56:1). Very striking is that when Joel says the Day of the Lord is “near” (Joel 1:15; 3:14), he uses the same Hebrew word for “near” as when Numbers 24:17 says the Messiah was “not near.” We do not know why God started saying the Day of the Lord was near but then kept delaying it, but that is what Scripture reveals.

It is worth noting that some people say that the Bible says the Day of the Lord is near because when people die the next thing they will experience is their resurrection and the Day of the Lord. But that explanation has the same problem that “imminent” does; if the Day of the Lord was near because it came for the person when they died, then throughout the Old Testament it would have always been said to be “near,” but for more than the first three-quarters of the Old Testament the Day of the Lord was not near, but far away.

Some theologians state that the Kingdom was “near” in the sense that Jesus was personally present, but that explanation is not correct. For one thing, Christ did not say that “the King” was near. He said that “the Kingdom was near,” and what that meant to his listeners was that all the promises of the Old Testament about the Kingdom were about to be fulfilled. Also, Jesus revealed who he was many times, such as to the apostles (Matt. 16:16-20), the woman at the well (John 4:26), the blind man Jesus healed (John 9:35-39), and more, and in none of those cases in which Jesus revealed himself did he say he was “near.” So there is no Scriptural reason to take Jesus’ message that the Kingdom was near to mean that he himself, “the king,” was near.

All the evidence indicates that the message Christ was preaching was straightforward and were the words he received from God: that the Kingdom was near (cf. John 7:16; 12:49; 14:10; 14:24). The same thing can be said for the prophets of old. Jesus and the prophets had proclaimed the Kingdom was near because God told them to say that, but then for reasons known only to Him, God delayed what He said would come soon. Many people have a hard time with this because they say that it made what Jesus said historically inaccurate, but the same thing had happened to many prophets before Jesus, and the fact is that God controls the timing of the Second Coming, and if God saw fit to delay it then we should accept what God did and not think less of Jesus, John the Baptist, or the prophets because of an action God took for His own reasons.

[For more on the many different ways that Jesus said the Kingdom of God was coming soon, see commentary on Matt. 16:28. For more on what Christ’s kingdom on earth, the “Kingdom of God” (also called “the Kingdom of Heaven”) will be like, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Mar 1:16

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

**“for they were fishermen.”** In this case, Peter and Andrew were fishermen. There would be other people who used cast nets to catch fish to eat.

Mar 1:17

**“Follow me.”** The Greek is a three-word phrase, “come after me,” which is idiomatic for “follow me. The word “follow” here is a different word from “follow” in Mark 1:18. The disciple would follow behind the teacher in the biblical culture (cf. Matt. 4:19-20).

**“I will have you fish for people.”** The Greek text literally reads, “I will make you become fishermen of people.” The kind of fishing the disciples did was not like the fishing that most people think of today, which uses a rod and reel, line, hook, and often a bobber (there was some hook-and-line fishing in Israel, but it was for a quick meal, not for making a living; cf. Matt. 17:27).

The disciples generally would have fished by cast net fishing. That involved a circular net with weights around the perimeter that was thrown by hand into the water. When properly cast, the net would open into a wide circle that was pulled down by the weights, edges first, over the fish and thus entrapped them. This technique has been improved significantly with today’s monofilament cast nets that have special strings that draw the net closed after it has been thrown and allowed to sink. Cast net fishing is why the Gospel records say the disciples cast their nets into the sea (Matt. 4:18; 13:47; Mark 1:16; John 21:6).

Cast net fishing is hard work. The nets can be heavy and the act of repetitive throwing and pulling in empty nets can be exhausting and frustrating. Furthermore, cast net fishing, like most fishing, gets the best results before dawn or near dusk and into the night, so the hours are long and inconvenient. Also, if the fishermen have any hope of being successful, they must know both the waters and the habits of the species of fish they are after, so success involves study, not just happenstance.

The other common type of fishing in the Middle East and on the Sea of Galilee involved a dragnet. That involved a net that could be up to 300 yards (274 meters) long and 8 yards (7.3 meters) deep, although it could also be considerably smaller. The dragnet had weights at the bottom of the net and floats at the top, and it was put out into the water parallel to the shore by boats, and then pulled into shore by groups of people who would “drag” the net through the water and over the bottom. Dragnet fishing is mentioned in the Old Testament and the Gospels (cf. Hab. 1:14-16; Ezek. 26:5; 32:3; 47:10; Matt. 13:47-48).

So when Jesus said that he would make his disciples into fishers for people, his metaphor—which was not picked by accident—included hard work, frustration, patience, endurance, and knowledge. It is by following Jesus, the master fisherman, that disciples learn to bring people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is not easy, but it is rewarding in this life and will be richly rewarded by the Lord in the next life.

[For more information, see *The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament* by Mendel Nun.]

Mar 1:18

**“and immediately they left their nets.”** Reading this verse without its full context in the Gospels and culture of the time makes the calling of the apostles seem magical on Jesus’ part and rash and unwise on the apostles’ part. These future apostles were already disciples.

[For more information, see commentary on Matt. 4:20.]

Mar 1:19

**“he saw James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.”** James and John were the sons of Zebedee.

Mar 1:20

**“And immediately.”** See commentary on Mark 1:18.

Mar 1:21

**“Capernaum.”** Capernaum would become Jesus’ hometown when he left Nazareth.

[For more information, see commentary on Mark 2:1.]

The record of Jesus casting a demon out of a man in the synagogue at Capernaum is in Mark 1:23-28 and Luke 4:33-37.

**“began to teach.”** The verb is likely the ingressive imperfect, that Jesus began to teach. Jesus did not just read the scrolls in the synagogue, he taught the people. Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. Of course, Jesus would not have taken over the meeting, but rather when the opportunity came he taught the people to bring them God’s truth.

Mar 1:24

**“What do you want with us.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

**“Have you come to destroy us?”** Jesus Christ came to destroy the Devil and his followers and his works, and the demons who followed the Devil knew that. The Greek word translated “destroy is *apollumi* (#622 ἀπόλλυμι). *Apollumi* means “to cause or experience destruction.”[[21]](#footnote-26929) The Gospel of Matthew says that we are to fear God, who is the one who can “destroy both soul and body” in Gehenna (Matt. 10:28), and John 3:16, using the same Greek word, says that the unsaved will “perish,” but those who believe will have everlasting life. Romans 2:12 also says the unsaved will “perish.” The demons knew that Jesus Christ came to destroy them in the Lake of Fire after a period of burning in the Lake of Fire (cf. commentary on Matt. 8:29).

Mar 1:25

**“subdued.”** Verse 25 has a couple words that have technical meanings relating to Greek magical arts (which we understand is actually part of the spiritual battle), that we must pay attention to in order to understand the verse. In every language, there are words that have a technical meaning as well as a standard or usual meaning. In this verse, the Greek word translated “subdued” is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω), which usually means to express strong disapproval of someone: rebuke, reprove, censure; or to speak seriously, and thus warn in order to prevent or end an action; or “punish.”[[22]](#footnote-13427)

That is not its meaning here, however. For one thing, the demon would not respond to being “rebuked.” It is too arrogant to know, or it does not care, that it is doing evil. Jesus would have certainly followed the wisdom of Proverbs: “a mocker does not listen to rebuke” (Prov. 13:1; cf. Prov. 9:7, 8; 15:5, 12; 17:10; 23:9; 29:9). In this context, *epitimaō* is used in the technical sense within Greek religion for gaining control over a spirit, a demon.

The technical sense is not common in Greek literature that has survived to this day, and so does not show up in many Greek lexicons.[[23]](#footnote-12761) That fact helps explain why not many Bible teachers are aware of the technical use of the word that refers to subduing rival powers in the spiritual battle between good and evil. Robert Guelich translates the opening phrase of verse 25: “Jesus subdued him....” and notes that in contexts like these, *epitimaō* is “a commanding word uttered by God or by his spokesman, by which evil powers are brought into submission.”[[24]](#footnote-18900) Greg Boyd writes: “...the term denotes an authoritative exercise of God’s power in subduing his enemies. It accomplishes what it speaks[[25]](#footnote-28982)”

*Epitimaō* also occurs in the records of Jesus “rebuking” the storm on the Sea of Galilee, after which there was a great calm (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24). Jesus subdued the storm by superior spiritual power. Greg Boyd writes: “It thus appears that, in “muzzling” this storm, Jesus is muzzling yet another demon.”[[26]](#footnote-28894) It seems clear that the storm was caused by a demon. Many of Jesus’ apostles who were with him on the boat when the storm came up were experienced fishermen and would not have risked their lives if the weather looked threatening. The Devil was trying to take advantage of Jesus being in a supposedly vulnerable position and kill him or the apostles by drowning them.

In the spiritual battle, there are some spirits that are more powerful than others. Strength and authority are real among spiritual beings, just as they are real on earth among creatures of the flesh. In Daniel 10:1-13 there is a spiritual battle in which an angel of God is prevented by a demon from answering Daniel’s prayer until a stronger angel shows up and assists in the fight. Revelation 12:7-9 describe a war in heaven in which the Devil is the weaker one and loses the fight, resulting in his being thrown down to earth.

Describing the spiritual battle, or any spiritual reality for that matter, is difficult. Therefore the Bible uses vocabulary that describes the spiritual battle that the Greeks would be familiar with—sorcerer against sorcerer and god against god—so the people could understand that Jesus was subduing evil spirits by using greater spiritual power. Jesus wielded the power of the true God, and thus was able to subdue the demon by that power, expressed through words. Jesus did not gain control over the demon by virtue of some “magic words” or formula that he used, as if he were some sort of Greek sorcerer. “It is not a magical incantation...it is powerful Word of the Son.”[[27]](#footnote-13360) The power came from God and was used by Jesus, who then instructed the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:5-8), and the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1-17), in casting out demons in the spiritual battle. Every Christian has the inherent power through the gift of holy spirit to subdue and cast out demons.

**“Be bound.”** As with the word “subdued” (Mark 1:25 above), the Greek word *phimoō* (#5392 φιμόω) has a technical meaning in this context that relates to the spiritual battle. Ordinarily, *phimoō* means to close the mouth with a muzzle or to silence. For example, “Do not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain” (1 Cor. 9:9). *Phimoō* is also used in Matthew 22:12 for the man who came to the wedding without the proper wedding clothes and upon being confronted was “speechless” (literally, “muzzled”) and not able to say a word. However, *phimoō* was used in Greek magic to denote the binding of a person with a spell. Moulton and Milligan write that it can refer to “the binding of a person by means of a spell, so as to make him powerless to harm.”[[28]](#footnote-30910) Ann Nyland writes in her footnote for Matt. 22:12 that *phimoō* is “a technical term from pagan magic. It was used…to denote the binding of a person by means of a spell…The verb is ‘Be muzzled!’ but translated as ‘bound’ in the magical texts. This is one of the 2 technical terms used for binding in Greek pagan magic.”[[29]](#footnote-24468)

While it is true that the translation, “Be quiet” or “Silence,” which most versions have, is part of the meaning, the real force of the command, *phimoō*, is about binding the power of evil. Thus, the Greek conveys a spiritual power that binds evil and that is much better expressed by the command “Be bound,” than it is by the English, “Silence,” which does not convey any of the spiritual binding of evil that is the real point of the command. Jesus did not just command the demon to be quiet—although that is included in what he did—he bound it with the power of his word. That he commanded the demons not to speak can be gained from the sense of the word, the context, and scope of Scripture, as we see in Mark 1:34. Another indication that Jesus’ command was not an immediate demand for silence was that the demon came out with a shriek. If Jesus had in fact commanded by the power of God that there be “silence,” the demon would not have even shrieked.

Mar 1:26

**“throwing him into convulsions.”** Although the Greek word is more literally “tear,” it has the medical meaning of throwing someone into convulsions. Demons who inhabit a person’s body can easily do that.

Mar 1:30

**“Simon’s mother-in-law.”** The apostle Peter was married, but typical of the biblical culture, neither his wife nor his children get much attention; in fact, their private lives are protected by the silence. This record is in Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31, and Luke 4:38-39.

Mar 1:32

**“they brought to him everyone.”** This verse shows the great dedication the people of the time had for obeying the Law, and it sets a great example for us. The day being spoken of, that had just ended, was a Sabbath, as we learn from Mark 1:29. On the Sabbath people could not walk very far (a Sabbath day’s journey” was just over a half mile or .8 km), and they could not carry a burden, so carrying a sick person could not be done. If the people did not put the Law above their own desires, they would have said, “Forget the Law! I need help now!” and they would have ignored the Law and brought the sick to Jesus as fast as possible. The fact that they waited until sundown to bring the sick to Jesus shows their dedication to God and the Law.

Mar 1:34

**“because they knew him.”** This is expanded in Luke 4:41, where the text says, “they knew that he was the Christ.” People may have been confused about who Jesus was, but the demons were not.

Mar 1:36

**“went searching for him.”** Jesus had left without telling anyone, and when the disciples knew it they went searching for him. The KJV, “followed after him,” is not correct here.

Mar 1:38

**“towns.”** This is a very rare word in the New Testament, signifying a town that is not big enough to be called a “city” or have a wall around it, but is too big to be called a “village.” It is likely referring to a nearby town that is just big enough to have a market.

**“for that is why I came.”** Jesus’ ministry on earth was to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom and get people saved (cf. Luke 4:43). The Greek could be translated “for this purpose I came.” Jesus was born and came to humankind to do God’s work and to give his life a ransom for many (John 18:37).

Mar 1:40

**“kneeling down.”** The word for “kneeling” is not in some Greek manuscripts and is disputed, but the man did kneel. The way of paying respect in the biblical world was to go down to one’s knees and then bend the body and face down to the ground. Comparing this record in Matthew, Mark, and Luke shows that is what the man did. Matthew indicates he paid respect by bowing down to the ground (the same word Matthew uses for bowing down is used for “worshiped,” cf. Matt. 8:2). Mark 1:40 says the man kneeled, which was preliminary to bowing down to the ground in respect, and Luke 5:12 says the man fell facedown to the ground. All three records are true. The man showed respect as Matthew says, which would have been by bowing down, then Mark says the man kneeled, which was necessary before bowing the upper body and face to the ground, then Luke says the man fell with his face to the ground, which is the final part of the bowing down (see commentary on Luke 5:12).

Mar 1:41

**“touched.”** The Greek verb is *haptō* (#681 ἅπτω), a word that has two distinct meanings. It properly means “*to fasten to, make adhere to*; hence, specifically to fasten fire to a thing, *to kindle, set on fire,* (often so in Attic Greek); cf. Luke 8:16; 11:33; 15:8. However, when it is used in the middle voice (*haptomai*; #680 ἅπτομαι) it means “to make close contact with,” and has a very wide range of applications. It can mean, touch, take hold of, hold; cling to; to have contact with, or partake of something with cultic implications, (often used of touching as a means of conveying a blessing or “touching” or partaking of an unclean thing, including eating, almost like we would say, “you have not touched your food”); it can be used almost idiomatically for intimate touch, sexual contact (1 Cor. 7:1; we use “touch” the same way today); and it can be used for contact with someone with a view to causing harm, i.e., injure (Job 5:19 LXX, “no evil shall touch you.”).[[30]](#footnote-17945)

In this verse, there is little doubt that Jesus did more than just make light physical contact with the leper. He would have at the very least placed his hands on him as any priest or healer would do to convey a blessing. He may have even gone so far as to hug the leper, but that is less probable, especially given the culture and cultural expectations of both the leper and the people.

On a lexical note, some confusion can occur when studying *haptō* because most lexicographers recognize it as one Greek verb that has different definitions in different voices, something not uncommon. Nevertheless, James Strong, author of *Strong’s Concordance*, assigned a different Strong’s number to *haptomai*, the middle voice of the verb. Thus there appear to be two words in *Strong’s Concordance* and *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance*, but only one word in Thayer and most other Greek lexicons.

Mar 1:44

**“See to it that you don’t say anything to anyone.”** Jesus often said this when he healed people. (cf. Matt. 9:30, blind men; Mark 7:36, a deaf person; Luke 8:56, a dead girl). On the other hand, he told some of the people he healed to spread the news (cf. Mark 5:19). The reason Jesus told people to not talk about their healing is never explicitly stated, and there are likely various reasons for it. One reason would be the often infectious doubt and unbelief that come from scoffers who hear of the deliverance, which could adversely affect the person who was healed. Another reason would be the personal privacy of the individual, who would often be immediately elevated to “movie star status” in their community, as happened to Lazarus. Still another reason would be likely, especially in cases such as this healing, the need for Jesus to not be thought of as “unclean” or worse, as “contagious,” in his culture. Touching a leper made the person unclean (Lev. 15:7), and since the cause of leprosy was unknown, not only were people with leprosy scrupulously avoided, no doubt sometimes people who touched lepers were looked upon with suspicion and avoided.

**“as a testimony to them.”** Jesus’ healing the leper would be one more testimony that he was the Messiah. However, the Greek wording can, and often is, understood in a negative sense, “as a testimony against them.”[[31]](#footnote-29502) The priests were against Jesus, and their not seeing the miracles that he did as proof of who he claimed to be was against them.

**Mark Chapter 2**

Mar 2:1

**“entered again.”** Jesus had been teaching in the towns in Galilee. Now he returns to Capernaum (Mark 1:38-39).

**“at home.”** The Greek phrase is *en oikos*, and it does not mean “in a house” or “in the house,” as if it were Peter’s house. The phrases *en oikos* and *eis oikos* (Mark 3:19) are standard Greek phrases or idioms equivalent to our “at home.” Jesus moved to Capernaum after the people of his hometown, Nazareth, tried to kill him (Luke 4:29-31; cf. Matt. 4:13). Jesus either bought or rented a house in Capernaum, because John 2:12 indicates he even moved his family there. Shortly after Jesus moved to Capernaum, it became known as his “own city” (Matt. 9:1).

According to Mark 2:1, Jesus was “at home” when the people crowded his house to such a degree that men had to let a paralyzed man down through the roof (Mark 2:4). This was one of the times that the amazing love and compassion that Jesus had for people was clearly visible because he was much more concerned about the man and amazed by the trust in God those men had than he was concerned about any damage that was done to his house, which was no doubt repaired reasonably quickly.

One of the reasons Jesus likely picked to move to Capernaum was that it was on the Via Maris, the “Road of the Sea,” which was the great trade route from Egypt in the south to Damascus in Syria and on to Mesopotamia (see commentary on Matt. 4:15). The fact that the Via Maris passed by Capernaum helps explain why that city had a centurion living there (Matt. 8:5ff; Luke 7:3ff), which meant having Roman troops stationed in the town, and that it had a tollhouse and tax collectors like Matthew so revenue could be collected from the passing caravans (Mark. 2:14). Capernaum was thus a cosmopolitan town with much commerce and opportunity. No wonder, Jesus was so disappointed at the overall reception he got in Capernaum, despite the fact the people were so proud of their town and Jesus referred to it as “exalted.” It was a town with lots of people, yet such a small group of them really believed. Thus he said, “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? *No*, you will go down to the grave. For if the miracles had been done in Sodom that were done in you, it would have remained until this day” (Matt. 11:23).

Jesus Christ chose Capernaum to be his hometown after he left Nazareth; he chose a cosmopolitan town where there would be plenty of opportunity to share the Word and reach others, locals as well as people traveling through the town, and also the opportunity for others to more easily reach him.

Mar 2:2

**“the word.”** The “word” that he was teaching about was likely about the Kingdom of God (cf. Mark 1:14-15).

Mar 2:3

**“bringing to him a paralyzed man.”** This record of the healing of the paralyzed man occurs in Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12; and Luke 5:18-26.

**“being carried by four *men*.”** The man was being carried on a “bed,” which in that culture was a thick cloth that people slept on.

Mar 2:4

**“uncovered the roof.”** The literal Greek is “they unroofed the roof.” This record contains an unspoken lesson in ministry and life that is important to learn. Jesus was teaching the Word of God to the crowd, as Mark 2:2 says. He was interrupted by this man and his friends who very badly wanted the man healed. The word of God does not tell us about what Jesus was teaching, it tells us about him being interrupted and changing direction to take care of the man and teach the crowd and Pharisees about what is really important and about his authority on earth. The unspoken lesson has to do with interruptions. Although we generally do not like to be interrupted from something we are doing, we should look to see if there is an opportunity to do God’s work when we are interrupted, rather than just being annoyed or always assuming that interruptions are from the Devil.

**“bed.”** This was not a modern bed, but mats for sleeping.

[For more on beds in the biblical culture, see commentary on Matt. 9:6.]

Mar 2:5

**“saw their trust,”** Jesus saw the trust that they had because of their action.

**“Child.”** The word “child” is likely not referring to the paralyzed man’s age, but instead denoting Jesus’ authority and compassion. Jesus is speaking endearingly to the paralyzed man as a father would to his child.

Mar 2:7

**“He speaks blasphemy.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) is transliterated (not translated) from the Greek into English as “blasphemy.” In English, “blasphemy” is only used in reference to God. However, in Greek, *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* (the noun) did not have to refer to God or a god, although they could, but were common words that were used of someone speaking against another. The primary meanings were showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. In this case, the religious leaders thought it was insulting to God’s reputation that Jesus would forgive sins, so “blasphemy” is appropriate, because it is related to God.

[For more information on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“Who can forgive sins except God alone?”** The religious leaders thought that by forgiving sins, Jesus was harming the reputation of God, because they thought that only God was able to forgive sins. But the Bible never says that only God can forgive sins. The rabbis taught that, but that does not make it true: it was just their tradition. In truth, only God can forgive sins; however, God’s representatives, to whom God delegates the authority to forgive sins, can forgive them—or, more accurately, declare that they are forgiven if they receive the revelation to make that declaration.

The religious leaders were used to prophets speaking for God, but not forgiving sins, although they should have been open to that. Nathan came very close when he said to David, “Yahweh also has transferred your sin” (2 Sam. 12:13). Actually, given the author/agent aspect of the Hebrew language and culture, acting on revelation from God, Nathan could have said, “Your sin has been forgiven.” It should be especially clear to us that God delegated to Jesus the authority to forgive sins, because Jesus taught that very explicitly. “For the Father does not judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son….I am not able to do anything on my own. As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is righteous because I do not seek *to do* my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:22, 30). Note that Jesus could forgive sins against God, but it was only “as he heard” from God, and born-again children of God have that same privilege today.

Forgiving sins, or knowing that one’s sins have been forgiven, is essential to having a peaceful life. Great anxiety, and both mental and physical sickness, can come from feeling unforgiven and in danger of judgment. Jesus knew that, and loved the man in the record and told him his sins were forgiven, which opened the door for the man to be healed. Experience tells us that many times people are not healed because they do not think they are forgiven, or they do not forgive others. Christians should be quick to tell unbelievers that if they get saved, their sins are forgiven and remind believers that if they confess their sins, then the sins they have committed after their salvation are forgiven (1 John 1:9).

Jesus’ action in stating that the man’s sins were forgiven was not meant to prove that he was God, rather, it was to show that God “has given [Jesus] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). Notice that the onlookers were amazed that such authority had been given *to men*. They did not conclude from what Jesus did that he must be God. They drew the simple conclusion that God must have given authority to this man to forgive sins. Elsewhere, Jesus delegates the authority to the apostles saying, “If you forgive the sins of anyone, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of anyone, they have been retained” (John 20:23). If being given the authority to forgive sins means the person is God, then we should conclude the apostles were God also. But this is surely absurd. Instead, we should acknowledge that the authority ultimately comes from God, and he delegates it to people in certain situations.

[For more information on Jesus being the fully human Son of God and not being “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on “the Holy Spirit” being one of the designations for God the Father and “the holy spirit” being the gift of God’s nature, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 2:8

**“perceived in his spirit.”** Jesus perceived in his spirit, meaning that he received revelation from his Father, God, via the gift of holy spirit that was upon him.

[For more on what “revelation” is and how it works, see commentary on Gal. 1:12. For more on the manifestations of holy spirit referred to as a message of knowledge and a message of wisdom, see commentary on 1 Cor. 12:8. For more on the uses of “spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’” For more on the difference between Holy Spirit and holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 2:9

**“Which is easier...?”** Which is easier to say and accomplish, declaring someone’s sins are forgiven, or divine healing? They are equally easy. See commentary on Luke 5:23.

**“pallet.”** This was not a modern bed, but mats for sleeping.

[For more on beds in the biblical culture, see commentary on Matt. 9:6.]

Mar 2:10

**“to forgive sins.”** This is an anacoluthon, an unfinished sentence. Jesus does not complete his sentence by words, instead, for emphasis, he completes it by action.

[See Word Study: “Anacoluthon.”]

Mar 2:12

**“picked up the pallet.”** [See commentary on Matthew 9:6]

**“glorified God.”** The people did not know Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God; they thought he was a prophet. Thus as God’s prophet, when Jesus did a miracle, the people rightly credited God for raising up the prophet and giving him the power to do healings and miracles. The people are not thinking Jesus is God.

Mar 2:13

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

Mar 2:14

**“Levi.”** This is another name for the apostle Matthew. The calling of Matthew is recorded in Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; and Luke 5:27-32.

**“sitting at the tax collector’s booth.”** We know from Roman records that tax collectors checked what the fishermen had caught as they brought in their boats, so it makes sense that the tax office was very close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee (v. 13) and stopped at the tax office to call Matthew.

Mar 2:15

**“his house.”** Matthew’s house. Luke 5:29 makes it clear that it is Matthew’s house (Matthew is called Levi in Mark 2:13-17, and Luke 5:27-30). Matthew was a tax collector, so it makes sense that his friends were tax collectors and “sinners,” which is why so many people like that were at the dinner.

[For more information see commentary on Matt. 9:10.]

Mar 2:16

**“Why is.”** The Greek word *hoti* is not typically used as an interrogative, “why,” but it can be, and seems to be doing that here. The Greek texts of Matthew and Luke do have the “why.”

**“and drinking,”** which appears in many versions, was added by copyists, probably to harmonize with Luke 5:30. There is strong evidence that it is not original.

Mar 2:17

**“not come to call the righteous.”** This verse has a couple of meanings that are interwoven. It has a strong meaning with a built-in confrontation that is right on the surface, but also another, deeper meaning that is important to understand. The primary meaning has to do with the contrast between the Pharisees, who thought they were righteous, and the “sinners” they condemned. The secondary meaning is that no one is righteous in the sight of God based on their own merit, so Jesus is actually saying he came to call everyone.

The Pharisees believed they were righteous before God. This shows up in quite a few verses. For example, in Luke 7:29-30 the common people admitted their sin and went to John the Baptist to be baptized and cleansed from their sin, but the Pharisees considered themselves to be righteous in the sight of God and thus refused to be baptized by John. Also, Jesus again confronted the Pharisees and said to them: “You are the ones who make yourselves righteous in the sight of others” (Luke 16:15 REV).

A vital part of the self-righteousness of the Pharisees was that they kept apart from things (including people) that they thought might defile them. In fact, the very name “Pharisee” comes from the Greek word *Pharisaios* (Φαρισαῖος), which comes from the Aramaic word *Perisha* (פְּרִישָׁא), which means “set apart” or “separated.” While there were some good-hearted Pharisees like Nicodemus (John 3:1) who wanted to be separated unto God in a right way by living in humility and obedience to God, as we see in Scripture, far too many Pharisees allowed their “separation” to separate them from the real work of God and keep them aloof from God’s work on earth. Thus, while Jesus ate at Matthew’s house with Matthew’s tax-collector friends, the Pharisees kept themselves separate from the group.

It should have been obvious to all the Pharisees, as it was to Nicodemus, that Jesus was a teacher who was sent by God. His teachings were powerful, and he demonstrated his authority by doing signs, miracles, and wonders, which they knew to look for (1 Cor. 1:22; Matt. 12:28; 16:1; John 2:18; 6:30). If Jesus was eating and drinking with “sinners” and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God, then they should have followed his example. The fact that they didn’t, indeed, couldn’t, should have driven them to repentance. Instead, they plotted to kill Jesus. So when Jesus said to the self-righteous Pharisees that he had not come to call the righteous, far from confirming their belief that they were righteous, they should have been stricken by the difference between Jesus’ ministry and theirs, repented, and changed.

As for any “sinners” in the area close enough to hear the Pharisee’s question and Jesus’ answer, when Jesus said he had not come to call the righteous, they would have immediately seen the irony of the situation. It is even likely that they had been shunned by the Pharisees before, and saw through their religious hypocrisy, and they would have immediately picked up on the fact that when Jesus seemingly referred to them as “righteous,” it was irony, even perhaps humorous and bordering on sarcastic.

The other meaning in Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees is that no one is righteous, so everyone was in need of being saved, and Jesus came to save everyone. In Romans 3, Paul quotes extensively from the Old Testament to show that no one is righteous in God’s sight based on their own merits (Rom. 3:10-17). But the verses that Paul quoted, and others like them, were conveniently explained away by the Pharisees. In truth, every person needs to be saved by Jesus Christ. This brings up a very important point: it is not a person’s perfect godliness or sin-free life that makes them attractive to God and worthy of His grace, it is a person’s humble acceptance of his fallen state and his need for God’s mercy and grace that opens the door for God’s saving grace. Herman Ridderbos wrote: “It is emphatically maintained with good reason that Jesus’ preaching is much rather dominated by the conviction that man has lost his value and that, notwithstanding, God is willing to accept him, or, as Wendland puts it paradoxically: ‘It is not the value, but the unworthiness of man in God’s eyes...which brings man into relation with God.’”[[32]](#footnote-18092)

**“but sinners.”** For more on Jesus calling sinners to repentance, see commentary on Luke 5:32.

Mar 2:18

**“fasting.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:14.

Mar 2:19

**“wedding guests.”** The literal Greek is “sons of the bridechamber,” which was an idiom for the wedding guests; and in some contexts more specifically for the friends of the bridegroom who were at the wedding.

**“groom.”** In many English versions, the older term “bridegroom” is used, but it just means the groom.

Mar 2:20

**“groom.”** In many English versions, the older term “bridegroom” is used, but it just means the groom.

**“in that day.”** Meaning, “in that time period.” The word “day” is being used as a period of time.

Mar 2:21

**“No one sews.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:16.

Mar 2:22

**“No one puts new wine.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:17.

**“wineskins.”** A “bottle” or container made from animal skin.

[For more on skin-bottles, which were usually made from the skins of goats, see commentary on 1 Sam. 10:3.]

**“so are the wineskins.”** There is also significant textual evidence for the reading of this phrase as: “the wine is poured out and the skins are ruined.” The likely reason that the NA 28 goes with the reading in the REV is that it is the shorter reading. It is much more likely that the copyists added clarifying words to later manuscripts rather than leaving out the word “poured out” and switching the word order. Therefore, this shorter reading is likely the original.

Mar 2:23

**“he was going through the grainfields.”** This record occurs in Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 6:1-5. There were six incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which he showed that taking care of people was not considered “work” by God and thus was more important than keeping rules about the Sabbath that were made by humans. The six incidents were picking grain on the Sabbath and five healings (see commentary on Matt. 12:9).

Mar 2:24

**“Why are they doing.”** To the Pharisees, plucking grain on the Sabbath was breaking the Mosaic Law. See commentary on Luke 6:2.

Mar 2:25

**“you.”** This “you” is plural in the text. “Have all of you never read….”

**“and those who were with him.”** David was not alone when he came to Abiathar the priest. Just like Jesus had his disciples with him, David had some men with him (cf. Mark 2:26).

Mar 2:26

**“Abiathar.”** The name “Abiathar” is questioned because in the record in 1 Samuel 21:1-9, Ahimelech is the priest. Although many commentators simply assume Mark made a mistake, we believe the Word of God is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16), and that “Abiathar” is not a mistake. There are several ways this apparent contradiction might be solved. One of them is that both men may have been referred to by both names. That would be one good explanation for why 1 Samuel 22:20 refers to Abiathar as the son of Ahimelech, but 2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 18:16; and 24:6 refer to Ahimelech as the son of Abiathar. It was quite common for someone to be referred to by different names. But it also has been suggested that Abiathar had a son named Ahimelech who was a priest, and that could explain the Old Testament verses that seem to switch the names.

Another solution, frankly, a more likely one, is that both Ahimelech and Abiathar were present when David came. It is even possible that due to Ahimelech’s age, Abiathar had started to take on the duties of the priesthood and Mark recognized him for that. That would be similar to the position of Annas and Caiaphas at the time of the ministry of Christ. Annas was the elder and still called High Priest, but Caiaphas was the man actually running the priesthood and he is also called High Priest. But even if that was not the case, we know it was common for priestly families to live together, just like Eli did with his sons (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12ff), and the city of Nob had at least 85 priests (1 Sam. 22:17). When Doeg the Edomite killed 85 priests, Ahimelech was killed and Abiathar escaped and went to David (1 Sam. 22:20), and became High Priest under David. This could be why Mark says that David entered the house of God “in the days of Abiathar” (KJV, NIV), or “in the time of Abiathar” (ESV, NASB). Since Abiathar would have taken over the priesthood de facto as soon as his father died, David did in fact enter the house of God “in the days of Abiathar,” the well-known High Priest under David.

**“the Bread of the Presence.”** The Bread of the Presence was large cakes of bread that were in the Tabernacle and Temple (see commentary on Exod. 25:30).

Mar 2:27

**“The Sabbath was made for people.”** God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a blessing so that people might have time to rest, and also so that the Israelites would remember that it was Yahweh who brought them out of the slavery of Egypt (Deut. 5:15), which would help them praise Him on the Sabbath day. Yet the religious leaders had gradually made the Sabbath regulations so oppressive that the Sabbath was often more of a burden than a blessing. God simply said not to “work,” but the religious leaders so tightly defined with ungodly restrictions what “work” was (and then figured out for themselves ways around their regulations), that people became slaves to the Sabbath, instead of the Sabbath being a blessing and servant to people. The Sabbath regulations became part of “the yoke of the Law,” and that harsh yoke was done away in Christ. The New Testament is clear that people do not have to keep the Sabbath (Col. 2:14-17).

[For more on the Sabbath, see commentary on Exod. 20:10.]

**“people.”** Although many versions have “man,” that must be properly understood. The Greek is *anthrōpos*, which is being used in the generic sense of humankind or “people,” not a man, a male. An easy way to tell that is that the Greek word is singular, but the verse is certainly not saying that the Sabbath was made for one individual male person. The Sabbath was given so people could have a day of rest. Even slaves were to be allowed to rest on the Sabbath and not be forced to work (Exod. 20:10).

Mar 2:28

**“For this reason, the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”** If the Sabbath is made for people, and Jesus Christ is Lord of people, then Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath for the benefit of the people. We see that here when Jesus allowed his hungry disciples to pick off heads of grain and eat them even though it was the Sabbath.

**Mark Chapter 3**

Mar 3:1

**“a shriveled hand.”** The record of healing the man with the shriveled hand is in three Gospels (Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11). There were six incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which he showed that taking care of people was not considered “work” by God and thus was more important than keeping rules about the Sabbath that were made by humans. The six incidents were picking grain on the Sabbath and five healings (see commentary on Matt. 12:9).

Mar 3:3

**“Get up in the midst *of the people*.”** Christ told the man to stand up in the midst of the crowd (cf. Luke 6:8). The healing would be performed by a word, not by a touch. He did not ask the man to come up front, but healed him in the middle of the crowd, right where he was.

Mar 3:4

**“or to do harm.”** The Greek word translated “harm” in this context is often translated “evil,” but that translation does not fit well here. It is never lawful to do “evil,” not on the Sabbath or on any other day. Here in Mark, the word “evil” has the same connotation that it does throughout the Old Testament; it refers to something bad or harmful happening. In this case, we are helped by the complete verse, where doing “harm” is paralleled to the word “kill.” The Pharisees were so mean-spirited that they would have done “harm” and flogged or executed a criminal on the Sabbath, and they knew it, so they remained silent when Jesus brought it up. But they could not bring themselves to do good on the Sabbath if it meant breaking their Sabbath traditions.

**“to save a life or to kill.”** In the phrase “to save a life or to kill,” Jesus might have been alluding to the Pharisees’ overwhelming desire to keep the law even perhaps to stone someone to death on the Sabbath, yet, they are not willing to save lives on the Sabbath. This is brought out more clearly in the parallel passage which talks about the sheep falling into the pit (cf. Matt. 12:11). The Greek word translated “life” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” The Greek word has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it refers to the physical life of the body, which is why most versions translate it “life,” which is accurate in this context.

[For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’”]

Mar 3:5

**“anger.”** The Greek word translated “anger” is *orgē* (#3709 ὀργή, pronounced “or-'gay”). The Greeks used the word *orgē* for natural human anger, and for violent emotions in general, such as anger, wrath, or indignation—the context determined the exact meaning. Here we see Jesus expressing his (and God’s) anger at the hard-heartedness, blindness, and cruelty of the religious leaders. For more on *orgē* meaning anger, wrath, and punishment, see commentary on 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Mar 3:7

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

**“a large crowd from Galilee.”** Mark 3:7-8 seems to actually describe two different sets of people, one from Galilee where Jesus had his headquarters and spent most of his time, and one from many other places where either Jesus had visited or word about him had reached.

**“followed *him*.”** Jesus’ headquarters was in Galilee, so he was near the people of Galilee most of the time, so they could “follow him.” In contrast, the crowd that had come from further away had to travel to get to where he was, so the text says those people “came to him” (Mark 3:8).

**“And *people* from Judea.”** The idea of “people” comes from the third-person plural verb “came” (“they came”) at the end of the verse.

Mar 3:8

**“and from Jerusalem.”** The wide area covered by this crowd of people who came to Jesus shows the tremendous influence that his ministry had. It was not easy to travel in those days, so the people who came really wanted to see him. Jerusalem is at least a few days’ journey to the south of the Sea of Galilee,

**“Idumea”** Idumea is the territory south of Judea and at least a five-day walk from the Sea of Galilee. When the Nabateans displaced the Edomites, the Edomites moved west into southern Israel and over time became known as “Idumaeans.” Herod the Great was an Idumaean.

**“beyond the Jordan.”** The phrase “beyond the Jordan” refers to territories east of the Jordan River and could be a day’s to many days’ journey from the Sea of Galilee.

**“Tyre and Sidon.”** The areas of Tyre and Sidon are some 35 to 50 miles to the northwest of the Sea of Galilee, generally at least a few days’ journey away.

It is easy to surmise that many of the people came because they heard about healings and miracles, but with such large crowds, there is every reason to believe that some of the people came because they heard about the teachings of Jesus and were searching for truth and answers to long-held questions.

Mar 3:9

**“And he told.”** Mark 3:9 is unusual because it has two subjunctive verbs in the same sentence. Some commentators suggest that in this case, the first subjunctive should be understood as an imperative.[[33]](#footnote-24087) The grammarian Daniel Wallace says that while rare, that is an acceptable understanding of the subjunctive in some circumstances. It makes sense in this verse.

**“crush.”** The Greek *thlibō* (#2346 θλίβω) is *to press* (as grapes), *press hard upon*.[[34]](#footnote-27699) The versions are split between “press upon” and “crush,” but the people were already pressing upon him (v. 10). He wanted to be sure they did not crush him.

Mar 3:11

**“when the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down.”** These unclean spirits are inside human beings, people, who fall down under the control of the demons and cry out. A person in the crowd would just see a person fall before Jesus and cry out, but the Bible shows us the reality behind the physical occurrence.

Mar 3:14

**“And he appointed twelve.”** The choosing of the apostles is in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; and Luke 6:13-16.

**“whom he named apostles.”** The phrase “whom he named apostles” is lacking in the majority of Greek manuscripts, but some important Alexandrian and Caesarean witnesses have it. So the external textual support is actually in favor of the inclusion of the reading. Also, Mark tends to redundancy. So the phrase is more likely original than not, although there is enough textual variation that this phrase could have been added by copyists from Luke 6:13. The inclusion of the phrase in Luke 6:13 is not in doubt, so the phrase does occur in the original text, even if not in Mark.

Mar 3:16

**“Peter.”** Jesus continues the tradition of God and other ancient rulers by changing the names of those whom he rules. He changed Simon’s name to “Peter.” Historically, changing someone’s name might be done to prove your power over someone, but Jesus would not have done it if Peter, James, and John were not dedicated to him. Notice that he does not change Judas’ name. (Cf. Gen. 17:5 and 17:15; 32:28; 2 Sam. 12:24 and 12:25; Jer. 20:3; Gen. 41:45; 2 Chron. 36:4; 2 Kings 24:17; Dan. 1:7.)

Mar 3:18

**“Simon the Zealot.”** See Commentary on Matthew 10:4.

Mar 3:19

**“came home.”** The Greek phrase is *eis oikos*, and it does not mean “into a house” or “into the house,” as if it were Peter’s house. The phrases *eis oikos* and *en oikos* (Mark 2:1) are standard Greek phrases or idioms equivalent to our “at home.” Whether Jesus was in his own house or “at home” in Capernaum is not clearly described. The Word Biblical Commentary has “went to his house,” and that is a distinct possibility.

[For more information see commentary on Mark 2:1.]

**“Iscariot.”** See the commentary on Matthew 10:4 for more information.

Mar 3:20

**“and the crowd came together again, to such an extent that they were not even able to eat bread.”** The multitude had come together before, but this time it was to such an extent that Jesus and his apostles could not even eat.

Mar 3:21

**“when his family heard *this*.”** The Greek is idiomatic: literally, “those who were beside him,” but that is an idiom that generally refers to friends, family, or associates, and here the context favors Jesus’ family (cf. Mark 3:31). The Greek is *para* (#3844 παρά), a preposition usually meaning “beside.” Thus the book of Mark is vague here, saying only that these people were those who were beside him. This is a case when we have to rely on other parallel records to give the details, and we learn what happened from the scope of Scripture. Matthew 12:46 and Luke 8:19 let us know that this group of people is his mother and brothers. At this point, Jesus’ brothers did not believe in him (John 7:5) and thought he was out of his mind. It is not clear what Mary thought. Given the way Jesus said, “Who is my mother” (Matt. 12:48), it is possible and perhaps even likely that, although Mary knew Jesus was the Messiah, she was confused about him and thought that he had somehow gotten away from what he was supposed to do as Messiah. The common teaching of the day about the Messiah was wrong, for example, that he would never die. It is also possible, however, that with her husband dead she was not able to stand against her sons who would have been running the family at the time.

This record of Jesus’ family coming to take charge of him is a clear indication that Jesus’ stepfather, Joseph, was dead; otherwise, he would have been leading the group. That means Joseph died between the time Jesus was 12 (Luke 2:42) and the time he started his ministry. He had worked with his father, the builder, and had become a builder himself (Mark 6:3). This group “set out” to take him. They arrive in verse 31.

**“to seize him.”** In the honor-shame society of the ancient Near East, if a family member was behaving in such a way that the family thought he or she was bringing shame to the family, members of the family would seize the offending person and take physical charge of him. Women were sometimes killed for dishonoring the family, and this is still known today as “honor killing.” Jesus was in a precarious situation if his family had won the crowd, but as it turned out (and we are not told exactly how this occurred) his family left without taking him with them.

**“they were saying.”** Jesus’ family was saying that Jesus was out of his mind, and they were supported in what they thought by others who were saying basically the same thing (e.g., Mark 3:22).

Mar 3:22

**“Beelzebul.** The Greek is *Beelzeboul* (#954 Βεελζεβούλ), which gets put into English as “Beelzebul.” He is called the “ruler of the demons” in Luke 11:15. “Beelzeboul” is “lord of the dunghill.” This comes from the Hebrew *zebul* (dung, a dunghill).

[For more on the name Beelzebul and other names of the Slanderer (the Devil), see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

The versions differ as to whether this is one statement by the scribes, or two statements. The Greek could go either way, but it seems like the people who were accusing Jesus of having Beelzebul also said that was how Jesus was casting out demons.

**“the ruler of the demons.”** This phrase is used in part to describe Beelzebul, in the first part of the verse, so from it, one thing we know is that the Jews were considering Beelzebul to be the ruler of the demons or to us, another name for the Slanderer (Devil). The Greek word translated “ruler” is *archōn* (#758 ἄρχων), which is from archē, “first,” and it means the one who is first, thus the “ruler, commander, chief,” etc.

[For more on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Mar 3:23

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost.

[For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13. For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Mar 3:26

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost.

[For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13. For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Mar 3:27

**“ties up.”** The word “ties up” (*deō*) was a common word for bind, “tie up,” and one of its uses was “to describe the ‘binding’ power of curses.”[[35]](#footnote-30767) The context is the casting out of demons (v. 28), so the “binding” in this verse refers to binding a demon and making it powerless by the power of God. See commentary on Matthew 12:29.

Mar 3:28

**“people...their sins.”** The text is literally, “sins of the sons of men,” but “sons of men” is an idiom for people and can be unclear in English because some people are not familiar with the idiom.

**“and whatever blasphemies they speak.”** The literal is “whatever blasphemies they speak blasphemously.” The Greek noun *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία) and the verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) are transliterated (not translated) from the Greek into English as “blasphemy.” In English, “blasphemy” is only used in reference to God. However, in Greek, *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* (the noun) did not have to refer to God or a god, although they could, but were common words that were used of someone speaking against another. The primary meanings were showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. The two uses of “blaspheme” in this verse inflected differently is the figure of speech polyptoton.[[36]](#footnote-22288)

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

[See Word Study: “Polyptoton.”]

Mar 3:29

**“blasphemes.”** See commentary on Mark 3:28.

**“the Holy Spirit**.” “The Holy Spirit” is the name for God that emphasizes His power in operation and His special holiness. God is called “the Holy Spirit” in a number of verses in the NT, including Matthew 1:20; 12:32; and Hebrews 9:8.

[For more information on the uses of “Holy Spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’”]

**“will never be forgiven.”** For more information on the “unforgivable sin,” see commentary on Matthew 12:31.

**“an everlasting sin.”** That is, a sin that will not be forgiven but will have everlasting consequences.

Mar 3:31

**“arrived.”** They started out in Mark 3:21. The parallel passage is Matthew 12:46-50.

Mar 3:32

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“looking for you.”** The Greek is forceful, “seeking you.”

**Mark Chapter 4**

Mar 4:1

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

**“facing the lake.”** The crowd was on the land, and Jesus was in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, so the crowd was “facing the lake.”[[37]](#footnote-25050)

Mar 4:3

**“The Parable of the Sower.”** The Parable of the Sower and its explanation is in Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 14-20; and Luke 8:5-8, 11-15.

The parable Jesus tells in verses 3-8 is almost universally referred to as “The Parable of the Sower” because that is what Jesus called it (Matt. 13:18). However, it could just as well be called “The Parable of the Soils,” because the parable is not primarily about God who sows the seed; nor is it about the seed itself, which is the Word of God (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11). The “sower” in the Parable of the Sower is not specifically named because it is anyone who speaks the Word to lead people to salvation.

[For more information on the Parable of the Sower, see commentary on Matt. 13:3.]

**“Listen!”** The Greek is *akouō* (#191 ἀκούω), which means to hear, to listen, or to understand, and it is in the imperative mood. Coupled with *idou* (“Pay attention!) it is an extremely powerful way to say that we better pay attention to what Jesus is saying in the parable.

**“Pay attention!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“The sower went out to sow.”** The seed in this parable is the word of God (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11), specifically the “message about the kingdom” (Matt. 13:19) which Jesus and others were preaching and teaching—that if a person believed would lead to salvation. Now, in the Administration of Grace, people believe in the death, resurrection, and Lordship of Jesus to be saved (Rom. 10:9). The “sower” is not specifically named in this parable because it is anyone who speaks the Word to lead people to salvation.

Mar 4:4

**“the birds.”** In biblical times, birds were usually considered evil or harmful, and in the Parable of the Sower, the “birds” represent the Devil and his demons and the demonic influence they exert in the world. Thus, in the explanation of the parable, the birds are “the Wicked One” (Matt. 13:19), “the Adversary” (Mark 4:15); and “the Devil” (Luke 8:12).

[For more information on the birds being evil, see commentary on Matt. 13:4.]

Mar 4:5

**“because the soil was not deep.”** The Greek is more literally, “because it had no depth of soil,” but that is awkward in English (cf. CEB, NAB, NET).

Mar 4:8

**“some fell.”** The manuscripts are divided, with some reading the singular and some the plural, but Mark has been using the singular and the accompanying verb is singular.

Mar 4:9

**“Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!”** This is almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15. For an explanation of the exclamation, see the commentary on Matt. 11:15. This verse is longer, reading, “Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen,” while the occurrences in Matthew read, “Anyone who has ears had better listen!”

Mar 4:10

**“began asking him *the meaning of* the parables”** The disciples’ question is asked and answered in Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; and Luke 8:9-10. Matthew has the most complete answer.

Mar 4:11

**“sacred secret.”** The Greek word *mustērion* (#3466 μυστήριον) means “sacred secret.” It refers to a secret in the religious or sacred realm.

[For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Eph. 3:9.]

**“those who are outside.”** The “outside” is not referring to outside the Twelve, because more people than the Twelve were around him and were taught the sacred secrets of the Kingdom (cf. Mark 4:10). Rather, the outside refers to those outside Christ’s group, many of whom were not invested in following Christ. Some of them were new, some of them were only interested in seeing miracles and such, and some of them were detractors who did not believe what he was teaching.

**“everything is in parables.”** Jesus spoke in parables to reveal the hearts of the people who were hearing him speak. Humble, godly people found out what the parables meant while pious, arrogant people did not bother to find out.

[For more on Christ speaking in parables, see commentary on Matt. 13:13.]

Mar 4:12

**“although they see...and although they hear.”** The Greek text is worded in a typical Semitic idiom, more literally, “seeing they see but do not perceive, and hearing they hear but do not understand.”

**“with the result that although they see, they do not perceive.”** This verse is quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 and follows the Septuagint more closely than the Hebrew text. The “with the result that” is the translation of the Greek proposition *hina* which in this context shows the purpose of the parables. Jesus taught in parables with the result that the hearts of his listeners were revealed, and that is more clearly stated here in Mark than in any other of the Four Gospels.

Some New Testament Greek texts such as the Byzantine Text from which the KJV was translated, read “of sins” at the end of the verse, but scholars are now aware that this is an explanatory gloss that worked its way into the text.

[For this quotation from Isaiah and the purpose of parables, see commentary on Matt. 13:13.]

**“otherwise they would turn *to God*.”** The people who are sinning, who are so hard-hearted that they will not even try to understand Christ’s parables, do not want to stop sinning, so they have no interest in knowing the will of God (cf. Job 21:14; 22:17; Isa. 30:11). If they did turn to God, He would heal them.

“**and be forgiven *of their sin*.”** The more literal translation is, “and it be forgiven them,” but the verb “be forgiven” is singular in the text, so it does not refer to the people but to the sin of the people.

Mar 4:13

**“understand...understand.”** In the REV, there are two Greek words translated “understand,” *oida* (#1492 οἴδα), and *ginōskō* (#1097 γινώσκω). Many times in the New Testament the two words are synonyms, which explains why so many English versions translated them both as “understand” here in Mark 4:13. It seems here that Jesus thought his parable was so clear that his disciples would just “grasp” what he was saying, and when they didn’t, he wondered how they would come to understand all his parables.

Mar 4:15

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost.

[For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13. For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Mar 4:19

**“and he becomes unfruitful.”** For the translation “he,” see commentary on Matthew 13:22.

Mar 4:21

**“Is a lamp brought out.”** The Greek is worded in the negative, “A lamp is not brought out to be placed under a basket,” but then to make the sentence make good sense words have to be added like “is it? So for clarity, many English versions word the sentence without the negative like the REV does.

**“basket.”** The Greek is *modios* (#3426 μόδιος), a container for measuring dry goods equal to about 2 gallons (8 liters).

Mar 4:22

**“hidden.”** “Hidden” has the same root word as “concealed” later in the verse.

**“For what is hidden is meant to be revealed​.”** Mark 4:21-22 (and Luke 8:16-17) are about the Kingdom of God being hidden, not about secret sins coming to light. The Greek text of Mark 4:22 uses a double negative, which can be seen in Young’s Literal Translation: “for there is not anything hid that may not be manifested.” This is difficult to reproduce in English because we do not use the double negative in the same way the Greeks did, and that difficulty explains why the English versions differ so widely in their translations. Some versions simply make the two negatives into a positive like the REV and NIV do for clarity in English.

The meaning of Mark 4:22 has been much discussed by scholars. This is in large part because the subject of the verse is not well understood. Many people believe that Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are about hidden sins being revealed, but that is not what these verses are talking about. The reason for most of the discussion is that the Gospel of Mark uses the Greek preposition, *hina*, which in this context describes purpose and means, “in order to,” or “for this purpose.” Thus, Mark is saying that the purpose of hiding the thing was in order to bring it out in the open at a later time. That is confusing to the people who think that Mark 4:22 is about sin, because people do not hide their sins with the purpose of later revealing them.

The reason that Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are worded the way they are in the Greek text is they are about the Kingdom of God and the secrets of the Kingdom, which God hid and is still hiding in part from people, but will reveal when the time is right. The context, as well as the verses themselves, show that Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are speaking about the Kingdom of God and not “secret sins.” For example, the lamp which is “brought out” is not a bad thing, it is a good thing, and it is brought out to be put on the lampstand to give light for all to see by. There is no indication in the text that the “lamp” is a bad thing like a secret sin that is dragged out of someone against their will and then revealed to others, or revealed on the Day of Judgment to the shame of the one who sinned. Also, Mark 4:22 says that what is hidden is hidden “in order to” (*hina*) be revealed, but that is not true of secret sins. As has been pointed out, people do not hide their sins with the purpose of later revealing them, and also, although some hidden sins will be revealed on Judgment Day, many sins are confessed and cleansed before they are publicly revealed, so in fact, those sins are never revealed. In contrast, the Kingdom of God, which is hidden now, will be revealed and it will come to light in a powerful way that is obvious to everyone (cf. Rev. 1:7).

More evidence from Mark 4:21-22 that Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of God being hidden but later being revealed comes from the context immediately before and after the event described in Mark 4:21-22. Just before that teaching, Jesus taught the parable of the Sower, and in explaining it he told the disciples that the secrets of the Kingdom of God were given to them (Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10). Furthermore, immediately after the event described in Mark 4:21-22, Jesus told parables that confirmed that the Kingdom was small and hidden but would become huge and unable to be missed. For example, he told the parable of the Kingdom being like seed on the ground, which would hardly be noticeable, but it grows up into a crop (Mark 4:26-29). Then he told the parable about the Kingdom being like a small mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32). He also told the parable about the Kingdom being like leaven that a woman “hid” in a large amount of meal (Matt. 13:33). Invisible at first, it would eventually leaven the entire loaf.

Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are about God hiding the Kingdom of God so that He could later reveal it, and that fits perfectly with the context. In contrast, there is nothing in the contexts of Matthew, Mark, or Luke that give any reason why Jesus would suddenly shift his teaching topic from the Kingdom of God to hidden sin.

As was stated at the opening of this entry, the fact that Mark 4:22 has a *hina* purpose clause has been a problem for translators. Understandably, it is a problem for most translators to think that Mark 4:22 is about secrets sins being revealed when the Greek text says that the thing was hidden “in order to” later reveal it, or that it was hidden “with the purpose of” later being revealed. Sadly, some English translations get around the problem by translating Mark 4:22 in a way that totally ignores the Greek preposition *hina* and its meaning, “in order to.” For example, the NLT translates Mark 4:22 as “For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light.” No one would ever read that translation and be able to discern that what was hidden was purposely hidden in order to reveal it later, and no one would conclude from that translation that Mark 4:22 is about the Kingdom of God. It is in part due to translation such as is in the NLT that the teaching that Mark 4:22 is about secret sins continues to be taught.

However, there are English translations that are more faithful to the meaning of Mark 4:22 and bring out its meaning. For example, the NIV reads, “For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.” The *Kingdom New Testament*, a translation by N.T. Wright, has, “No: nothing is secret except what’s meant to be revealed, and nothing is covered up except what’s meant to be uncovered.” The translation by Heinz Cassirer, *God’s New Covenant*, has this translation: “Nothing is kept hidden except with the intention that it should come into the open, nothing kept secret except with the intention that it should be brought to light.” It is easy to see from those translations that this verse cannot be about secret sins being revealed; no one hides their sin for the purpose of revealing it later.

Mark L. Strauss sees that Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of God and writes, “In context, the lamp more likely represents either (1) the message of the kingdom of God or (2) the kingdom itself, the coming of which Jesus had been announcing. Either of these fits the context….This may also be the point in Mark: the kingdom of God, though presently veiled, will one day be revealed.”[[38]](#footnote-28931)

Another piece of evidence that needs to be explained is the singular nouns and verbs in Mark 4:22. The *Emphasized Bible* by Rotherham gets the sense, and translates the opening phrase as, “For it is not hidden.” The thing that is hidden is not a lot of secret sins, which would seemingly be represented by a plural subject, verb, and object, but rather it is a singular thing, a “what” or an “it,” and that is expressed by the subject (it), verb (is), and object (hidden), which are all singular in the Greek text. The thing hidden is the Kingdom of God that was purposely hidden by God with the purpose of fully revealing it when He was ready to reveal it.

Realizing that Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are about the Kingdom of God being hidden with the purpose of later being revealed does not mean that people’s unconfessed secret sins will not be revealed on the Day of Judgment, because they will be revealed, but secret sins is simply not what Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are talking about.

Mar 4:23

**“Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!”** This is the same Greek phrase as occurs in Mark 4:9 (see commentary on Mark 4:9), and almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15. For an explanation of the exclamation, see the commentary on Matthew 11:15. Jesus emphasized his teaching that everything we do will be disclosed on Judgment day with this solemn command and warning.

Mar 4:25

**“For whoever has.”** Jesus taught this principle of having and not having five different times. See commentary on Matthew 25:29.

Mar 4:31

**“mustard seed.”** For more information on this parable, see commentary on Matthew 13:32.

**“when it is sown on the ground.”** The farmer literally scatters the seed on the ground. It is not planted in the ground, but thrown on top of the soil, which is why the birds can come and eat it so easily.

Mar 4:32

**“becomes larger than all the other garden plants.”** See commentary on Matthew 13:32.

**“birds of the sky.”** See commentary on Matthew 13:32.

Mar 4:33

**“to the extent that they *each* were able to, they understood *him*.”** This phrase is quite peculiar and its meaning could be missed if the context is ignored. One might assume that Jesus taught in parables in order to be clear, to use illustrations to bring clarity to his points, as modern preachers often do. However, what we find here in Mark and in the other Gospels is something quite different. In Mark 4:34, Mark tells us that Jesus explained these parables privately to his own disciples, thus, they needed further explanation; the parables were not clear teaching. In fact, just a few verses prior, Jesus gave the reason for why he spoke in parables, “The sacred secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those who are outside, everything is in parables, with the result that **although they see, they do not perceive, and although they hear, they do not understand; otherwise they would turn *to God* and be forgiven *of their sin*.”** (Mark 4:11-12). Therefore, the parables actually served to keep the truth hidden from people who were not seeking after God.

This phrase in Mark 4:33 follows Jesus’ parable of the sower and his parables on the kingdom. In his parable on the sower, Jesus speaks of the seed that falls in different places and either grows fruitfully or dies (Mark 4:3-9), as the “word” (*logos,* #3056 λόγος) having various levels of growth in people’s hearts depending upon their posture toward God. Some people receive the word initially and then fall away (Mark 4:16-17); in some, they receive it and it keeps growing (Mark 4:20); and in some, the word is never received (Mark 4:15). “The parable of the sower has asserted that people’s ability to ‘hear’ is quite varied, and is determined by factors in their own character and situation rather than by the form of teaching.”[[39]](#footnote-26536) This context is vital to keep in mind when we arrive at Mark 4:33. Notice how Mark says that Jesus spoke the “word” to them (Mark 4:33). So, the very same parable that Jesus just finished telling at the beginning of the chapter applies to those listening to Jesus’ parables here in verse 33. Then Mark says, “to the extent that they *each* were able to understand *him*.” By this phrase, Mark believes that different people would have different levels of understanding of Jesus’ words. Some would receive it joyfully and others would reject it. Mark believes that the “words” of Jesus would fall in different places, just as Jesus taught in his parables.

Therefore, Mark is not trying to tell us that Jesus only used parables to the extent that they would understand him, and if they did not understand him, then he would stop using parables. Instead, Mark is applying the parable of the sower that Jesus just taught, making the point that some people will understand his parables more than others.

Mar 4:35

**“Let’s cross over to the other side *of the lake.*”** The record of Jesus calming a storm—which is immediately followed by the record of Jesus healing a man afflicted by demons—occurs in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25. The most detail occurs in Mark. For one thing, in Mark, we see that Jesus was exhausted from ministering all day. In fact, he was so tired that even the water splashing on him from the great storm did not wake him up. It is also in Mark that we see that there were other boats sailing along with the boat Jesus was in, so the storm not only endangered Jesus and the disciples, but also other boats and people as well.

Mar 4:36

**“just as he was.”** This is a very important verse that shows us how hard Jesus pushed himself to serve and bless people. He was exhausted from serving. That is why he went right to sleep in the boat. The storm on the lake may have been natural, but the fact that it came up so quickly and was so fierce is evidence that it was likely caused by the Devil, the ruler of the authority of the air (Eph. 2:2). Thus, this would be similar to the deadly storm caused by the Devil in Job 1:18-19. The Devil knew Jesus was exhausted and would have tried to kill him off, thinking he might be too weak to defend himself and calm the storm.

[For more on “ruler of the authority of the air,” see commentary on Eph. 2:2.]

Mar 4:39

**“And he got up,”** In v. 38 the disciples woke him up, and the verb in v. 39 is stronger. He was not “sleepy” or “just coming to his senses” as so many do when they are awakened. He became fully awake and thus got up.

**“subdued.”** In this context, *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω) has a technical meaning: it is used in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon. Jesus subdued the storm, which was no doubt caused by a demon, by the power of God he wielded, which he expressed in words. The power came from God and was used by Jesus. Jesus did not gain control over the storm by some “magic words” or formula that he used. “It is not a magical incantation...it is powerful Word of the Son.”[[40]](#footnote-24411) For a more complete explanation, see commentary on Mark 1:25.

**“Silence!”** The Greek *siōpaō* (#4623 σιωπάω). “To refrain from speaking or making a sound, keep silent, say nothing, make no sound.”[[41]](#footnote-14651) Although this word gets translated “Peace” in many versions, it is not the standard word for peace.

**“Be still!”** As with the word “subdued” (above), the Greek word *phimoō* (#5392 φιμόω), translated “be still,” also has a technical meaning that applies in this context. Ordinarily, *phimoō* means to close the mouth with a muzzle or to silence. However, it was used in Greek magic to denote the binding of a person with a spell. Moulton and Milligan write that it can refer to “the *binding* of a person by means of a spell, so as to make him powerless to harm.”[[42]](#footnote-16354) Jesus commanded the water to “be still,” but also conveyed in the Greek is a spiritual power behind the command. Jesus did not just command the storm to be still—he bound it and the demon behind it with the power of his word. See commentary on Mark 1:25.

Mar 4:41

**“were filled with great fear.”** The Greek is literally, “they were afraid with a great fear.” The word can mean “awe” in some contexts, and here in this context, the feeling the disciples had would have been a blend of fear and awe. Awe at the power of Christ, but fear of that power as well and how it would show itself. Especially to the people of this time period, God seemed somewhat unpredictable.

**“Who is this.”** The text is literally, “Who then is this,” but the “then” is drawn from the context and the event that had just occurred, but that is not clear and is not the way we would say that in English, so adding the “then” makes the sentence awkward. The NIV and some other translations omit it for clarity, as does the REV.

**Mark Chapter 5**

Mar 5:1

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

**“Gerasenes.”** While Mark and Luke say “Gerasenes,” Matthew says “Gadarenes.” For more on how to harmonize this account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, see commentary on Matthew 8:28.

Mar 5:2

**“a man...with an unclean spirit.”** Matthew says there were two men, and has other different details as well. For more on how to harmonize this account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, see commentary on Matthew 8:28.

Mar 5:3

**“who lived in the tombs.”** The Greek text has the noun “dwelling,” as if it were a home, but that is hard to express in English because the man did not build a home in the tombs, he lived there. Changing the noun to a verb, “lived” makes the sentence clear in English. The man lived in the tombs (cf. Luke 8:27).

**“in the tombs.”** The Greek word “in” (*en*) can be “in” or, as many versions, “among,” but since the hillsides of that area east of the Sea of Galilee are steep and have many cave tombs, it is not likely he lived “among” the tombs. That would be akin to living on a hillside with some cave tombs around. It is much more likely that he lived inside a cave tomb, but what the state of dead bodies he would be around were, we are not told. They could be rotting, or have turned to dust.

Mar 5:5

**“night and day.”** The biblical day began at sunset, so “night and day” is correct.

Mar 5:6

**“bowed down before him.”** See commentary on Matthew 2:2.

Mar 5:7

**“What do you want with me.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

**“demand that you swear under oath.”** The Greek word translated into this phrase is the verb *horkizō* (#3726 ὁρκίζω), and in this context, it means to put someone under oath;[[43]](#footnote-11838) to demand that Jesus swears an oath by the name of God that he will not torment the demon. Many English versions translate *horkizō* by the English word “adjure,” which is a good translation, however, the term “adjure” might not be a familiar term to many English readers.

It seems very strange that the demon would demand that Jesus swear under oath “by God” not to torment him. How and why would he do that? In Matthew 8:29 the demons asked if Jesus was going to torment them before the “appointed time.” Demons know there is a day of judgment coming when they will be punished for their millennia of sins. But at the time of this encounter between demons and Jesus, they also knew from Scripture that there were things that had to happen before the day of judgment arrived, such as Jesus having his heel bruised (Gen. 3:15; which we now know was Jesus being tortured and put to death). By this time in Jesus’ ministry, it was clear to the demons that he was the one who would be the final warrior and judge who would see them put into Gehenna, but according to the promises in Scripture, that day could not come quite yet, so the demon wanted to put Jesus under an oath that he would not somehow circumvent the apparent timeline in Scripture and put him immediately into Gehenna. The plea went nowhere; Jesus would not agree to that.

This scripture is very revealing in that it shows that the demons are afraid of the Day of Judgment, but there are millions of human beings who have ignored or defied God all their lives who are not. The Day of Judgment and the punishment for unbelief that follows it should be frightening to anyone who does not believe. However, it is part of the pride of humankind that people willingly ignore God and also ignore their own death and destiny, acting as if they will not happen. But Judgment Day and the punishment that follows it will indeed happen, and at that time there will be sobbing and gnashing of teeth, just like Jesus said. It has been a major role of believers of all time to try to turn evil people back to God so that they too can live forever.

[For more on the sobbing and gnashing of teeth, see commentary on Matt. 8:12. For more on annihilation in Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

**“torment me.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

Mar 5:12

**“enter into them.”** When demons enter a person or an animal they can enter right into the person’s body and exert control from the inside.

Mar 5:13

**“And he allowed them.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:32.

**“the unclean spirits came out and entered into the pigs.”** Animals can be possessed by demons (see commentary on Matt. 8:32).

Mar 5:14

**“the men who were looking after them fled.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:33.

**“the people.”** The text reads “they,” but it is clarified in the REV as “the people,” that is, the people of the city.

Mar 5:15

**“clothed.”** The clothes would have likely come from the apostles. It was common to have at least an extra tunic to travel with (cf. Matt. 10:10).

Mar 5:17

**“territory.”** The Greek is more literally, “border” or “boundary,” and then, by metonymy, what is surrounded by a boundary, a region, territory, etc. The exact nuance must be determined from the context. In this case, “region” seems too large. The people just wanted Jesus out of their area. They did not understand his power over demons and seem to have been frightened by it (cf. Luke 8:37), and also perhaps they were concerned about losing more of their valuable animals.

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

Mar 5:18

**“afflicted by the demon.”** The Greek is singular, “by the demon,” and thus reference is being made to the top demon who was in charge of the other demons. The demonic world has higher and lower-ranking demons just as the angelic world does.

Mar 5:19

**“but he did not let him.”** This was a good answer given that the man was almost certainly a Gentile, and it would have caused problems for a Gentile to travel with Jesus and the apostles.

Mar 5:20

**“Decapolis.”** See commentary on Matthew 4:25.

Mar 5:21

**“the lake.”** This is the lake called “the Sea of Galilee.”

Mar 5:22

**“one of the rulers of the synagogue came.”** For evidence that this event occurred in Capernaum, see commentary on Luke 8:40.

Mar 5:23

**“Come.”** R. C. H. Lenski points out that in certain cases the Greek word *hina* [untranslated] simply introduces an imperative, not a purpose clause.[[44]](#footnote-11680) Here, it is the imperative of prayer, which is why some versions, fill in the “ellipsis” with “I pray.”

**“close to dying.”** The Greek is more literally that she “has the end,” meaning that she “is at the end” of her life.

Mar 5:25

**“And there was a woman.”** See commentary on Luke 8:47.

Mar 5:28

**“was saying.”** She talked to herself (cf. Matt. 9:21) over and over.

**“If I just touch.”** The Greek word *kan* goes with the verb “touch” and has the force of “just” or “only” in this verse (cf. NASB2020, CEB, CSB, NIV, NJB).

**“healed.”** The word “healed” is the Greek word *sōzō* (#4982 σῴζω). The Greek word *sōzō* has a wide semantic range and thus means different things in different contexts. For example, it can mean “be healed” from disease, as it is here in Mark 5:28, or it can mean things such as “delivered” or “rescued,” as from some danger, or it can mean “saved” as in saved from death and given everlasting life.

Mar 5:29

**“dried up.”** The Greek means to dry up, but the meaning of the word, in this case, is that her blood flow stopped immediately and she was healed.[[45]](#footnote-16521)

Mar 5:30

**“knowing in himself.”** The translation “knowing in himself” is very literal and very accurate. When a person with holy spirit ministers healing to other people, that ministering places a strain on the person that a spiritually sensitive person can feel. The strain is as much a spiritual drain as a physical one, although the feeling is in the physical body. For most Christian healers, it takes ministering to a lot of people before the drain can be clearly felt in one’s body, but Jesus Christ was the most spiritually sensitive person who ever lived and there is no reason to doubt that when the woman with the issue of blood took her healing from him that he felt it in his body, and thus knew it within himself.

Mar 5:34

**“has healed you.”** The Greek *sōzō*, in the context of sickness, is to be made whole or to be healed. In the context of everlasting life, it is to be “rescued, saved,” but that is not the context here.

**“Go in peace.”** Had Jesus simply let the woman take her healing and leave, she would likely have been wracked by guilt. Jesus knew not to let that happen, and in doing so set a wonderful example for us. We need to take care of people emotionally as well as physically.

**“*and free* from your affliction.”** The woman had already been healed, so Jesus is not commanding her to be healed, but to continue enjoying life in her restored health. The Greek noun translated “affliction” is *mastix* (#3148 μάστιξ), which is literally a whip, and was used metaphorically for a whipping, affliction, disease, etc.

Mar 5:35

**“Jairus.”** The name “Jairus” has been added for clarity due to the large number of pronouns in the context.

Mar 5:36

**“overhearing what they said.”** This phrase is more literally, “overhearing the word that was spoken,” but it refers to what the people said.

Mar 5:38

**“and people crying and wailing loudly.”** In the biblical culture, it was common and customary for people to cry loudly when someone died as a tribute to the person and to outwardly demonstrate one’s love for the deceased person. Also, there were professional mourners who would come to a funeral and weep and wail loudly to get people’s emotions flowing (cf. Jer. 9:17). If there were musicians available they often came as well (cf. Matt. 9:23). Jairus was a leader in the synagogue and an important person, and Capernaum was an influential town in the Galilee, so there is no doubt that there were professional mourners there, who had little or no actual ties to the family, and others who were not particularly close friends of the family, and so when Jesus announced that the girl was not dead they started laughing (Mark 5:38-40). Ordinarily, a person close to the family would have thought of Jesus as a hard-hearted troublemaker and become angry at him. The reason this crowd did not was due to custom: they were there to show support and not because they had a deep emotional tie to the family.

[For more on the difference between lamenting and mourning, see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:26.]

Mar 5:39

**“asleep.”** The Greek verb is *koimaō* (#2837 κοιμάω), to fall asleep, to be asleep. Sleep is used as a euphemism and metaphor for death (see commentary on Acts 7:60). What Jesus said was true in the common idiom of the day, which used “sleep” to mean dead, but the way he said it did not communicate that to the people.

Mar 5:40

**“they began to laugh.”** This is an ingressive imperfect.

**“and those who were with him.”** That is, those who he had brought along with him, i.e., Peter, James, and John.

Mar 5:42

**“for she was 12 years old.”** This describes why she could walk even though she had been referred to as “little” in this and other Gospel records.

**“greatly amazed.”** The Greek text is “amazed…with a great amazement,” which is the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of both noun and verb forms together.[[46]](#footnote-23838) It highlights the degree of astonishment, they were greatly amazed. Some manuscripts add “immediately,” and have “and immediately they were utterly amazed.”

[See Word Study: “Polyptoton.”]

**Mark Chapter 6**

Mar 6:1

**“came to his hometown.”** This record is also in Matthew 13:53-58. The context indicates that the “hometown” is referring to Nazareth, even though he had moved to Capernaum, which was now considered his home (see commentary on Mark 2:1).

Mar 6:2

**“being done.”** Present tense. Astonishingly, the people of Nazareth, who did not have trust in him, were able to admit that Jesus was doing miracles.

Mar 6:3

**“builder.”** See commentary on Matthew 13:55.

**“the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? And aren’t his sisters here.”** Mary had at least seven children, five boys, and at least two girls (see commentary on Matt. 13:55).

Mar 6:4

**“A prophet is honored everywhere except.”** See commentary on Matthew 13:57.

Mar 6:5

**“he was not able to do any miracles there.”** This is contributing evidence showing that Jesus is not God. It seems that in this instance, God did not grant Jesus his typical power to heal because of the unbelief of the people. If Jesus was God, he would never “not be able” to do a miracle, instead, the text would simply say that he did not do any miracles.

[For more on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” Also see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 6:6

**“in a circuit.”** This gave Jesus the chance to revisit the places he had been before. Samuel had done the same thing centuries before: “he went from year to year in a circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah” (1 Sam. 7:16).

Mar 6:8

**“staff.”** In Matthew and Luke, it seems Jesus said not to take a staff. For the apparent contradiction, see commentary on Matthew 10:10. It was common for men to walk with a staff or walking stick. The roads were often just paths that were rocky, uneven, and sometimes slippery. Bandits were common, and wild dogs were always a threat. A staff provided some support and protection.

**“traveler’s bag.”** The Greek word is *pēra* (#4082 πήρα), which referred to a bag that was often made of leather and which had a strap so it could be easily carried. Travelers would often carry such a bag and have supplies in it. Although the word *pēra* was also used of a “beggar’s bag” carried by Cynic philosophers, it is highly unlikely that would be the meaning here. The disciples of Christ are never portrayed as having to beg, and the Old Testament constantly affirmed that people who lived godly lives would be provided for. In this case, Jesus’ intention was that the people whose lives were touched by the apostles would take care of their needs.

**“money.”** The Greek word is *chalkos* (#5475 χαλκός), and it can refer to copper, brass, bronze, or sometimes even other metals. Also, by the figure metonymy, *chalkos* can refer to things made of those metals, such as idols or in this case, coins. Bronze coins were common at the time of Christ, and much more common among the people than silver or gold coins.

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

**“belt.”** The “belt” did not have money in it, but it allowed for the garment to be folded in such a way as to make a pocket in which small items such as coins would be kept.

Mar 6:9

**“two tunics.”** The “tunic” was the long shirt that was against the skin, like a very long undershirt. Sometimes travelers would take an extra one to keep from being cold. Jesus was making it clear that if the apostles were doing what he instructed and really helping people, their needs, which were little, would be taken care of. The outer garment was a thick cloak that was for warmth, weather protection, and could serve as a blanket to sleep under at night.

Mar 6:10

**“that area.”** See commentary on Luke 9:4.

Mar 6:12

**“people.”** The Greek text reads “they,” but it refers to people.

Mar 6:14

**“some *people* were saying.”** The manuscript evidence is divided. Some ancient manuscripts read “And he [Herod] said,” while other manuscripts read, “And they [some people] were saying.”

The contextual evidence, and the evidence from the other Gospels, is that Mark 6:14 is not recording what Herod himself said, but what others were saying about Jesus; likely other people who had witnessed the miracles that Jesus did. Herod heard what others were saying about Jesus (Luke 9:7), and drew his conclusion that Jesus was John who had been raised from the dead (of the choices he had, it may have been his guilt over killing John that led him to that conclusion). Herod had to draw his conclusion about Jesus from what he heard from others because Herod himself had never personally met Jesus until Jesus had been arrested in Jerusalem, taken to Pontius Pilate, and then sent by Pilate to Herod (Luke 23:6-8). Furthermore, if Mark 6:14 is what Herod said, then Mark 6:15 does not fit in the context. If, in Mark 6:14, Herod made a definitive statement that Jesus was John, then there would be no point for Mark 6:15 to say, “But others said, “He is Elijah.” And others said, “*He is* a prophet, like one of the prophets.’” Mark 6:15 would not contradict Herod’s conclusion if that is what Mark 6:14 had stated. The proper chronology of the situation is that Mark 6:14-15 fits with what Luke 9:7-8 says, that Herod was perplexed “because it was said by some that John had been raised from among the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, *and* yet by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.” Seen this way, Mark 6:14-15 is saying exactly what Luke 9:7-8 is saying, and Herod had to make a choice as to who Jesus was. Then Mark 6:16 reveals to us that Herod decided that Jesus was John, raised from the dead.

[For more on the chronology of what Herod heard and his conclusion about who Jesus was, see commentary on Mark 6:16.]

**“from among the dead.”** For an explanation of this phrase, see commentary on Romans 4:24.

Mar 6:15

**“Elijah.”** For information on why the people thought that Elijah would come, and why John the Baptist was called “Elijah,” see commentary on Matthew 17:10.

Mar 6:16

**“But when Herod heard *these words*, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.”** The evidence in Scripture is that Mark 6:16 is the first time that Herod declared that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

Herod himself had no personal knowledge about Jesus. Herod had never personally met Jesus until Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Pontius Pilate, who then sent him to Herod (Luke 23:6-8). So Herod said what he did about Jesus—that he was John the Baptist who had been raised from the dead and that was why he could do miracles—only because that was what he heard people say and it convinced him (cf. Mark 6:14; Luke 9:7).

The Bible tells us that when Herod first heard about Jesus, he did not know what to think; he was “greatly perplexed” (Luke 9:7). Herod heard from some people that this Jesus was John the Baptist; from other people that Jesus was Elijah; and from other people that Jesus was one of the Old Testament prophets who had been raised from the dead (Luke 9:7-8; Mark 6:14-15 REV). Upon hearing the three possibilities, Herod did not know what to think and said, “Who, then, is this about whom I hear such things?” (Luke 9:9).

At some point, and for some unstated reason, Herod decided that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead (Matt. 14:2; Mark 6:16). Herod parroted what he had heard but had no personal knowledge of, that Jesus was John raised from the dead and that that was why Jesus could do the miracles that he did (Luke 9:7; cf. Matt. 14:2).

[For more on Mark 6:14 and 6:16, see commentary on Mark 6:14.]

Mar 6:20

**“feared.”** Better than “was afraid of” here because there is an element of holy awe with the fear. In Hebrew, the two most common words for “fear” are the noun *yir’ah* (#03374 יִרְאָה) and the verb form of the same word, *yare* (#03373 יָרֵא). In Greek, the common words for fear are the noun *phobos* (#5401 φόβος) from which we get the English word “phobia,” and the verb form of the same word, *phobeō* (#5399 φοβέω). Both the Hebrew and Greek words for “fear” have a large semantic range, a large range of meanings, that includes our English concepts of “terror, dread, fear, timidity, respect, reverence, and awe.” Herod was somewhat afraid of John, but at the same time was in awe of him.

**“liked to listen to him.”** The Greek we translate as “liked to” is *hēdeōs* (#2234 ἡδέως, pronounced hay-de-ōs) and it means with pleasure, with delight, gladly. This shows that people can hear the Word of God taught and enjoy it, but not have it change their lives (see commentary on Mark 12:37).

Mar 6:21

**“military commanders.”** The Greek word designates a chiliarch. See commentary on John 18:12.

Mar 6:22

**“And when the daughter of Herodias came in.”** The daughter of Herodias is not named in the Bible but is named in Josephus as “Salome.”[[47]](#footnote-13347) The manuscript evidence slightly supports the reading, “the daughter of Herodias herself” over the reading that says, “his daughter Herodias.” Furthermore, the reading “the daughter of Herodias herself” makes more sense when compared to the parallel passage in Matthew, especially Matthew 14:8 which says, like Mark 6:22, that Herodias is the mother of Salome, and also when compared to the historical evidence in Josephus, which identifies Salome as Herodias’ daughter.

Mar 6:30

**“And the apostles gathered together.”** The feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-13. The feeding of the 4,000 is in Matt. 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10).

Mar 6:31

**“Come away *with me* to a solitary place all by yourselves and rest a while.”** Mark 6:30-32 says the reason Jesus went to a “solitary place” is that the disciples had recently gathered back together to Jesus after traveling to the cities of Israel and healing the sick, casting out demons, etc., and they had no time even to eat. In contrast, Matthew says it was because Jesus had just heard about the death of John the Baptist. Both things contributed to Jesus’ decision to go away with his disciples and get away from the crowd.

[For more on Jesus’ getting away for some time alone with his disciples, see commentary on Matt. 14:13.]

Mar 6:33

**“knew *where they were going*.”**[[48]](#footnote-31625) It is not that the people “recognized them.” Jesus had just been with them. They knew both Jesus and the apostles well. And, had they been sensitive at all, they also would have known why he was leaving—to get some privacy. But they were selfish, and knowing where he would go to be alone, got there before he did.

**“from all the *surrounding* cities.”** This is hyperbole to emphasize how many cities were involved.

**“arrived before them.”** This, and the start of verse 34, which is translated in many versions as “came ashore” or something similar, creates a contradiction with John 6:3-5. The crowd was not waiting on the shore for Jesus. If it were, he would have seen the people long before he came ashore. John makes it clear that the crowd, even if it was ahead of Jesus and the group with him for a little while, eventually lagged behind. Thus, Jesus arrived with his disciples on the shore and spent some time with them before the crowd assembled. Jesus “came out” of his retreat and saw the multitude assembled, and had compassion on them.

Mar 6:39

**“on the green grass.”** This is not grass as we in the West think of grass. This is just a field of weeds, but the Greek does not have a word that would be equivalent to our “weeds.”

Mar 6:40

**“of hundreds and fifties.”** The feeding of the 5,000 hearkens back to the time of Moses and the Mosaic Covenant when the people were governed by hundreds and fifties (Exod. 18:25). God had fed the people miraculously with manna at that time, and promised them abundance if they would obey the covenant (Deut. 28:1-14).

Mar 6:43

**“twelve baskets full.”** There are many different interpretations of what the “twelve” represents. However, we can see that each of the apostles went to collect the leftovers, and each came back with a full basket. Since the Bible does not give a specific reason for it, we can assume the number 12 has multiple implications. One implication is that each apostle would be taken care of even as he gave himself to others. Also, it showed that each apostle would have so that he could give—give to others and give to the Lord (it is noteworthy that the Lord did not have a basket for himself). However, the details in the record show that the primary meaning is that there would be bread for all twelve of the tribes of Israel through the Promised Messiah (see the commentary on Matt. 15:37).

Mar 6:44

**“the loaves.”** The words, “the loaves” are not in some of the ancient manuscripts.

Mar 6:45

**“immediately he made.”** The record of Jesus walking on the water is in Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-51, and John 6:15-21.

The feeding of the five thousand (much more when you include the women and children who were there) is one of the few events that is recorded in all four Gospels. It is a watershed time for Jesus Christ, and needs to be studied from all four Gospels to really understand it and what happened after it. After the feeding, the huge crowd became convinced that Jesus was their Messiah and they were going to come and take him by force and make him their king (John 6:14, 15). Jesus had to act swiftly to avoid a potential revolution which would have certainly also included charges against him by the Romans that he was a revolutionary, which would have no doubt landed him in prison.

As well as realizing the intent of the crowd, he recognized that his apostles were basically of the same mind as the crowd. They too were tired of Roman domination, Jewish perversion of religion, and the cares of the world, and they too were anxious for the Kingdom of God to come, which Jesus had been saying was at hand ever since he started his ministry. It was a very real possibility that the apostles could have been swept away with the emotion and conviction of the crowd and joined in the revolt. To prevent this, Jesus acted decisively. First, “immediately he made” his disciples leave the scene (Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45). He made them get into a boat and head west to Gennesaret (Matt. 14:34; Mark 6:53), and the next day they went from there a few miles northeast to Capernaum (John 6:59). Then he dealt with the crowd and sent it away (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:45). This was not easy to do. The people had to be calmed down and convinced to leave. Mark 6:45 says Jesus “was sending” the crowd away, the verb being in the present tense, indicating the action was ongoing, taking some time. It was not as easy as saying, “Go home now.” Jesus worked with the people to convince them to leave.

Now finally alone, with no disciples and no crowds, Jesus went to a mountain to pray (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; John 6:15). He needed wisdom and needed God’s help to keep his ministry on track, he needed to keep defeating the temptation to avoid the cross and try to become king immediately, and no doubt he prayed hard for his apostles that they would not be led away by false Messianic expectations. We get a glimpse of the wisdom and direction that God gave Jesus in his teaching and action when we read John 6:22-70, which occurred the day after the five thousand were fed (John 6:22). Jesus made a decisive shift in his ministry from just demonstrating the power of God for people and teaching them, to starting to require commitment from them (John 6:29, 53-58).

The reaction of the crowd was about the same then as it is today: most people talk about loving God and living the Word, but when you really require them to do it, they refuse. The people in Jesus’ audience said, “This is a hard saying; who is able to hear it?” (John 6:60), Even Jesus’ disciples grumbled about it (John 6:61). Jesus challenged his disciples about their unbelief, and many of them left (John 6:66). Jesus, most likely hurt and angered by the selfishness of the crowd and many of the disciples, turned to the twelve and asked, “Will you also go away?” Thankfully, they did not.

There are many lessons that can be learned from this account. One is that people are selfish. They are now, and they always have been. Jesus did not convince them otherwise, and neither will we. We must do what Jesus did: work with the people who want to work and let the others go. Another lesson is to not allow ourselves to be tricked and trapped by worldly aspirations. No doubt Jesus would have loved to have come into his kingdom without the pain of rejection and crucifixion, but it was not the will, nor the way, of God. Selflessness, humility, and giving are the godly way forward.

Another thing we can learn from the account is that sometimes quick and decisive action is needed to keep us out of trouble. Had Jesus not compelled the disciples to immediately leave the scene, he could have been fighting a battle on two fronts and had a hard time indeed. Another lesson is that prayer is essential for success. If Jesus needed to pray, surely we do too. One more thing we can learn is that the wisdom from God may be to change the direction of what you are doing. The result of what happened after Jesus’ great miracle, the potential revolt against Rome, and his hours of prayer was to change the direction of his ministry by adding that he required things from his disciples. This seemed to have the wrong effect because many disciples left, but the history of the early church shows us that those who stayed were tried and tested, and able to carry on the work of Christ after he ascended.

**“toward Bethsaida.”** Jesus sent them “toward” (the Greek is *pros*, “toward”) Bethsaida, which is nearer to Capernaum than they were on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, but the eventual destination was Capernaum (John 6:16-17). Bethsaida was almost a suburb of Capernaum, which was a major city, and site of a tax office and Roman troops, so for travel purposes, the names Bethsaida and Capernaum are synonymous. However, the boat landed at Gennesaret (see commentary on Matt. 14:34).

Mar 6:47

**“the lake.”** The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into the English “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

Mar 6:48

**“struggling as they rowed.”** The apostles were struggling as they were fighting against the jerking of the oars while the ship itself was being beaten (same Greek word as “struggling”) by the waves (Matt. 14:24).

**“fourth watch of the night.”** The Roman watches of the night were three hours each, and the fourth watch of the night started at our 3 a.m. and ended at our 6 a.m.

At the time of Christ, in both Jewish and Roman reckoning of time, the “day” was divided into 12 hours (John 11:9, “Are there not 12 hours in the day?). The first hour started at roughly 6 a.m. That made the “third hour” about our 9 a.m. (cf. Matt. 20:3; Acts 2:15); the “sixth hour” about our noon (cf. John 4:6; John 19:14; Acts 10:9); the “seventh hour” about our 1 p.m. (John 4:52), the ninth hour about our 3 p.m. (cf. Matt. 27:45, 46; Mark 15:34; Acts 3:1; 10:3); and the tenth hour about our 4 p.m. (John 1:39); and the eleventh hour about our 5 p.m. (Matt. 20:6).

Also, both the Jews and Romans divided the night into four “watches,” each being three hours long. This was true even though the Jews started their new day at sunset, at the start of the first watch of the night, and the Romans reckoned their new day at midnight, at the start of the third watch of the night (our day beginning at midnight comes from the Romans). That the Jews started their new day at sunset explains why the Bible usually puts the evening before the morning (cf. Gen. 1:5, 8; Dan. 8:14; 1 Kings 8:29; Mark 5:5; Acts 20:31).

The names of the four night watches were “evening,” “midnight,” “cockcrowing,” and “morning” (Mark 13:35: “Therefore, keep watch, for you do not know when the lord of the house is coming *back*, whether during the evening *watch*, or the midnight *watch*, or the rooster-crowing *watch*, or the morning *watch*.”). Sometimes, however, the watches were just called “first watch,” “second watch,” “third watch,” and “fourth watch.” On occasion, the “watches” were not accurate enough, and so even the night was divided into hours. This is why Paul was taken to Caesarea at the “third hour of the night,” our 9 p.m. (Acts 23:23).

The hours of the day in Roman times were often approximations, because there was longer daylight in the summer and shorter in the winter. However, in both seasons the day was divided into 12 hours. Thus we would say that the “third hour” of the day was around our 9 a.m., not 9 a.m. exactly.

The feeding of the 5,000 took place in the area we know as Bethsaida-Julius, on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 9:10). The disciples left that general area in the evening and headed for “Bethsaida” (Mark 6:45; cf. “Bethsaida of Galilee, John 12:21), which was apparently a small fishing village to the southwest of Capernaum (it can be confusing that the disciples left the area of Bethsaida and sailed toward Bethsaida. “Bethsaida” means “House of fishing,” and there were a couple of them on the Sea of Galilee). Thus the total distance the apostles had to row was likely somewhat less than five miles (eight km). This should have been an easy journey, but the wind was so against them that they had rowed for hours and were no doubt incredibly frustrated and near exhaustion.

**“he intended to pass by *near* them.”** Jesus would not have left the disciples in the lake in the storm, but wanted to pass close enough to be seen. The fact that they saw him on the lake was not an accident; Jesus intended for it to happen. It seems that Mark is intentionally borrowing from the Old Testament Hebrew idiom where God reveals Himself by “passing by” them. For example, God revealed Himself to Moses, saying, “I will make all my goodness pass by in front of you” (Exod. 33:19, cf. Exod. 33:22). Similarly, when Elijah ran from Jezebel, Yahweh revealed Himself to Elijah, and the text says, “Behold, Yahweh passed by” (1 King 19:11). Ezekiel 16:6 speaks of Yahweh passing by Israel when she was a forsaken baby and rescued her, then passed by again when she was of marriageable age and married her (Ezek. 16:8). In a similar way, Jesus, as God’s Messiah and representative on earth, intended to pass by the disciples in a manner in which they would see him and the situation would develop from there. Jesus’ walking on water was a teaching moment about trusting God for miracles and also Jesus continuing the process of the disciples recognizing him as the Messiah, which they fully acknowledged in Mark 8:29.

Mar 6:49

**“a ghost.”** The Greek word is *phantasma* (#5326 φάντασμα) and it means “something that appears,” from *phaino*, to appear. Thus an apparition or a ghost of some kind. The only other appearance of the word is in Matthew 14:26, where it is used in a sentence and translated “ghost.” It was a long-held belief that the sea was the home of spirits of various kinds. That the disciples saw what they thought was an apparition, a disembodied spirit coming toward them on the water, filled them with terror and they cried out in fear.

Mar 6:53

**“Gennesaret.”** This is where Jesus and the disciples landed, and it is confirmed in Matthew 14:34 (see commentary on Matt. 14:34).

**Mark Chapter 7**

Mar 7:1

**“And the Pharisees and some of the experts in the law…”** Mark can be read to mean that only the scribes came from Jerusalem, but Matthew 15:1 is clear that the entire delegation came from there. This record about clean and unclean is also recorded in Matthew 15:1-20, with some different details.

Mar 7:3

**“up to the wrist.”** The Greek literally reads “to the fist.” This is a good example of a custom being so obscure that a literal translation would only be confusing to the reader. Edersheim gives the best explanation we have seen, and Young’s Literal Translation renders according to his explanation.

“The water was poured on both hands…. The hands were lifted up, so as to make the water run to the wrist, in order to ensure that the whole hand was washed, and the water polluted by the hand did not again run down the fingers. …But there was one point on which special stress was laid. In the ‘first effusion,’ which was all that originally was required when the hands were Leviticaly ‘defiled,’ the water had to run down to the wrist. “The language of the Mishnah…can only refer to the wrist. The rendering ‘wash diligently’ gives no meaning; that ‘with the fist’ is not in accordance with Jewish Law; while “up to the elbow’ is not only contrary to Jewish Law, but apparently based on a wrong rendering of [the Hebrew].”[[49]](#footnote-10249)

The general uncertainty among commentators, however, about what the Greek text, “with the fist” means, explains the huge number of variations in the translations: “oft” (KJV), “carefully” (NASB), “ceremonial washing” (NIV), “thoroughly” (NRSV), “to the wrist” (YLT), etc. “wash.” The Greek is *niptō* (#3538 νίπτω), to wash.

Mar 7:4

**“they bathe themselves**.” The Greek is *baptizō* (#907 βαπτίζω), which means “…Properly, 1. *to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge*. **2.** *to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water*; in the middle and the 1 aorist passive *to wash oneself, bathe*; so Mark 7:4….metaphorically, *to overwhelm,* as … *to be overwhelmed with calamities,* of those who must bear them, Matt. 20:22f Rec.; Mark 10:38 f; Luke 12:50.[[50]](#footnote-18190) Many commentators have had problems with this verse, believing that even the religious Jews did not bathe themselves each time they came from the marketplace, but the text seems clear, and we must assume that some people did that, because his audience did not charge him with an absurdity.

Some versions have “and couches” (YLT) or “and tables” (KJV) after “copper vessels,” Metzger writes, “It is difficult to decide whether the words…were added by copyists who were influenced by the legislation of Leviticus 15, or whether the words were omitted (*a*) accidentally because of homoeoteleuton or (*b*) deliberately because the idea of washing or sprinkling beds seemed to be quite incongruous. In view of the balance of probabilities, as well as the strong witnesses that support each reading, a majority of the Committee preferred to retain the words, but to enclose them within square brackets.”[[51]](#footnote-28100) The REV leaves them out, following the original translation of the ASV.

Mar 7:6

**“This people.”** The phrase “this people” is a title that refers to Israel. The nation of Israel was called “the people,” so in some cases, it is appropriate to capitalize it when it refers to Israel.

Mar 7:7

“**they worship me in vain.”** The worship of the religious leaders was “vain,” i.e., pointless, worthless, and ineffective. It does not show true allegiance to God because it is not what God commanded and, in some cases, contradicts what God commanded (or contradicts the heart of what God commanded (see commentary on Matt. 15:9).

**“doctrines.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse, we felt “doctrine” was better than “teaching.” For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13).

Mar 7:9

**“tradition.”** The Greek word is *paradosis* (#3862 παράδοσις), and it means something that is handed over, or something that is handed down. Thus it can mean surrender or arrest, or it can refer to a “tradition.” Traditions can be a great help to people. God established traditions in the OT, such as keeping the Passover Feast every year. Jesus himself started the tradition of “the Lord’s Supper.” However, there are Christians who believe that any tradition created by man is an offense to God and should not be practiced or condoned. How should Christians view traditions? It seems clear that we should view traditions the same way Jesus did. There were hundreds of traditions in the Judaism of the time of Jesus (cf. Mark 7:4), but the ones he spoke against fall into several categories.

One category that Jesus spoke against was traditions of men that had, in the minds of the religious leaders, become equal to the commands of God. No matter how helpful they are or holy they seem, and no matter how many years they have been observed, traditions are only traditions, they are not commandments, and should not be treated as such. When traditions are treated like commandments, first, the words of man become elevated to the status of the word of God, and second, someone who is unable or unwilling to keep the tradition is almost always treated badly by those who do.

Another category of tradition that Jesus spoke against was traditions that could not be kept without ignoring or rejecting the commandments of God (Mark 7:8, 9). These traditions, by their very nature, are harmful. Jesus cited the tradition of giving “to God” the support that elderly parents needed (Mark 7:10-13). Of course, the support that was supposedly given “to God” ended up enriching and empowering the religious leaders, and the honor that God commanded that children give to parents was ignored.

A third category of tradition that is harmful is a tradition that has become a burden to a Christian’s life and walk, instead of being a blessing. The religious leaders had many burdensome traditions that they enforced (Matt. 23:4). A godly tradition is to be a blessing and bring people closer to God. A tradition that makes living a godly life into a burden should not be kept.

There are many traditions in the Church, and very few are kept by all Christian denominations. Most are not harmful, and can be helpful. For example, dressing up for Sunday church is a tradition in some denominations, and is not harmful unless it takes on the force of a command and someone who comes not dressed up is scorned or rejected. It can be helpful in that it helps some people take their worship time more seriously. On the other hand, the tradition of praying to “the saints” is practiced in some denominations, but is against the command of God and therefore harmful.

Christians should view traditions like Christ did. Even if a tradition is not “in the Bible,” it can still bring people closer to God in a very meaningful way. However, if a tradition begins to take on the force of a commandment, or if it makes godly living a burden, or especially if it contradicts the Bible or can only be kept at the expense of ignoring a biblical command, then the words spoken by Isaiah more than 2500 years ago still apply: “in vain do they worship me” (Mark 7:7; cf. Isa. 29:13).

Mar 7:10

“**Whoever speaks evil of their father or mother.”** This is similar to Matthew 15:4, and quite close to the Hebrew text of Exodus 21:17 (see commentary on Exod. 21:17).

Mar 7:11

**“But you say.”** Due to the rules that the Pharisees had put in place, they prevented people from helping their parents. It is showing us that if someone said that what they could have given to others is “Corban,” then the Pharisees held them to that for the rest of their lives and thus prevented them from helping their parents. It is not by saying Corban that people are prevented from helping their parents, but after people say Corban, the Pharisees then prevent them from helping their parents, and Jesus said that tradition was breaking the commandment of God. Believers have to be sensitive to what the Word of God really says about a subject because sometimes overzealous religious leaders put rules in place that keep people from obeying the Word of God.

Mar 7:16

This verse is omitted in the REV. This verse is absent from some important early texts such as A, B, and L. It seems to be a scribal addition, perhaps to parallel Mark 4:9 or Mark 4:23. There seems to be much more likelihood that the verse was added to later texts than removed from earlier ones.[[52]](#footnote-24421)

Mar 7:20

**“comes out of a person.”** That is, comes out of the person’s mouth (Matt. 15:18).

Mar 7:21

**“out of people’s hearts.”** The “heart” is the source of life. Mark 7:20-23 is similar to what Jesus taught in Matthew 15:18-19 (see commentary on Matt. 15:18).

[For more on the heart, see commentary on Prov. 4:23.]

Mar 7:22

**“stinginess.”** Literal: “an evil eye.” The “evil eye” was idiomatic in Semitic languages for someone who was greedy, covetous, and stingy, which is why some versions translate it as “envy” or “stingy” (cf. HCSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV). In Western cultures, the “evil eye” was a look or glance that meant harm and brought harm, but there is no evidence it was used that way in the Bible. See commentary on Matthew 6:22.

[For more on the idiom of the good eye, see commentary on Prov. 22:9. For more on the idiom of the evil eye, see commentary on Prov. 28:22.]

**“insults.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία, pronounced blas-fay-'me-ah) and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Mar 7:24

**“Tyre.”** Some manuscripts add the words “and Sidon,” but the textual evidence is that “and Sidon” was not original.

**“and *yet* he was not able to avoid being noticed.”** Many things happened to Jesus that he did not want to happen, and in this context, being noticed was one such thing.

Mar 7:26

**“Gentile.”** The Greek word is *Hellēnis* (#1674 Ἑλληνίς, pronounced hell-lay-'nis). The word *Hellēnis* can refer to a true ethnic Greek, or it can be used in the general sense of a non-Jew, a “Gentile.” Here the word means non-Jew, and translating it as “Greek” can be confusing, especially when Matthew 15:22 says she was a Canaanite woman. Versions such as the ESV, NASB, NJB, NLT, and NRSV, read “Gentile.” The language the woman would have spoken would have been Greek.

Here we see God extending His kingdom to the non-Jews. God has always wanted all people to be saved.

**“she kept begging.”** This translation comes from understanding the context and social situation.

Mar 7:27

**“pet dogs.”** see commentary on Matthew 15:26.

Mar 7:28

**“Lord.”** Some manuscripts have “Yes, Lord,” but the earliest manuscripts omit the “yes,” and its addition seems to be an attempt to harmonize Mark 7:28 with Matthew 15:27. Typically in manuscript studies, the shorter reading is more likely original, and scribes expand the reading as they copy it.

Mar 7:30

**“had gone out.”** The Greek is *exerchomai* (#1831 ἐξέρχομαι). The meanings include: to move out of or away from an area, and thus of an animate entity to *go out, come out, go away, retire*. Demons can inhabit the mind or body, and thus when they leave they are “gone out.”

Mar 7:31

**“he again came to the Sea of Galilee by way of Sidon.”** This is not what we would normally expect. Sidon is about 25 miles north of Tyre, so instead of heading southeast to the Sea of Galilee, Jesus headed deeper into Gentile territory and went through Sidon, then did a sort of loop and turned southeast and went through the region of the Decapolis, which was also Gentile.

**“Decapolis.”** See commentary on Matthew 4:25.

Mar 7:32

**“one who was deaf and had a speech impediment​.”** The record of the healing of this man only occurs in Mark.

Mar 7:33

**“and he put his fingers into his ears. Then, after spitting *on his fingers*, he touched his tongue.”** This record shows the great sensitivity and compassion that Jesus had for people. People brought this deaf-mute to Jesus. It is almost certain that he had never heard or spoken in his whole life because if he had become deaf he would still be able to speak. That means that he would not have understood much about what was happening as his family and friends led him to see Jesus. He likely picked up on the people’s excitement, but no doubt would have been confused and perhaps cautious as well. In that state, Jesus did not want him to be distracted by the crowd, but took the man aside by himself, where the two of them could make eye contact and the man could calm down and focus on Jesus.

Jesus understood the confusion the man would have been in and wanted to calm him and also communicate to him what was going to happen, but how? The man was deaf. So in this situation, Jesus communicated in the best way he could, using “language” the man could understand. Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears, indicating that something was going to happen that would involve them. Then he spat and touched his tongue.

Jesus would have spat on his hand and then touched the man’s tongue with the wet fingers, and he did that because it was believed in the culture that the spit of a holy man had healing power. Robert Guelich writes: “We do know, however, that the spittle supposedly had a therapeutic function in Greco-Roman (e.g., Pliny, *Nat. Hist*. 28:4.7; Tacitus, *Hist.* 6:18; Suetonius, *Vesp*. 7) and the Jewish world (Str-B, 2:15-17).”[[53]](#footnote-14828) The Bible itself has evidence that people believed in the healing power of the spit of a holy man, and Jesus has used his spit in the healings recorded in Mark 8:22-23 and in John 9:6-7.

Two other pieces of the “silent language” that Jesus used to communicate about the healing were that he looked up to heaven and that he sighed. That he looked up to heaven would indicate that he was looking to get, and perhaps asking for, help from God above. The sigh would communicate the relaxed state the man had no doubt longed for. To us, a “sigh” is generally a sign of resignation and is associated with disappointment, defeat, frustration, sadness, and perhaps also longing. But much of that comes from the sound we make, and the man was deaf. He could not hear the sigh, and furthermore, there is a “sigh of relief,” which is no doubt what this was. The man could see Jesus’ body relax after he breathed out; a relaxation that would have indicated freedom from frustration and pain.

Jesus’ non-verbal communication would have been clear enough to the man that he understood what Jesus was going to do, which shows Jesus’ desire that the man be calmed and not at all fearful. Furthermore, Jesus’ healing was much more than just a “surface healing” of some physical organs. When a baby is born it hears what is going on around it, but not knowing any words, all the talk and background sound around it is just disassociated noise. Over months of development, the sounds begin to be organized in the brain of the child, and it can begin to differentiate and eventually understand spoken language. But clinical work has now generally shown that if physical hearing is restored to someone who has been totally deaf into their mid-teens, the brain can no longer organize the mixed sounds of talk and background noise into discernable verbal communication, so the person can “hear” sounds but not learn or understand speech. So in this healing, not only did Jesus heal the man’s hearing, but the man’s brain was actually rewired so he could both understand what was said and speak. Thus this is one of the truly great healing miracles in the Bible, and it happened to a Gentile in the Gentile region of the Decapolis.

Mar 7:35

**“And immediately.”** Some Greek texts omit the word “immediately” and the scholars are divided. The miracle likely happened immediately whether or not the original text specifically said so.

**Mark Chapter 8**

Mar 8:1

**“there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat.”** The record of the feeding of the 4,000 is in Matthew 15:29-39 and Mark 8:1-9. Mark 7:31 tells us that when Jesus left the area of Tyre and Sidon he traveled to the area of the Decapolis, which was mostly northeast, east, and southeast of the Sea of Galilee and a Gentile area. So Jesus healed and blessed the Gentiles as he fulfilled the prophecy of being a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

Mar 8:8

**“baskets.”** The Greek word simply means “baskets.” Although some English translations say “large baskets,” the size of the baskets is not indicated by the Greek word, and it is unlikely that Jesus and the disciples had “large baskets” handy, whereas it is very likely that people who came to hear Jesus, or even his disciples, might have brought some smaller baskets with provisions for travel and such.

Mar 8:9

**“Now about 4,000 men were *there*…”** The feeding of the 4,000 is in Matt. 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10. The feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-13).

Matthew 15:38 clarifies that 4,000 men were there and there were also women and children, so actually, many more than just 4,000 were fed. This is the shorter reading represented in the Nestle-Aland Greek text, 28th edition; the longer reading, which is not likely original, is “Now those who had eaten were about 4,000 men.”

Mar 8:10

**“Dalmanutha.”** See commentary on Matthew 15:39.

Mar 8:11

**“And the Pharisees came out.”** This record is also in Matthew 16:1-4. The Pharisees were accompanied by the Sadducees (Matt. 16:1). The Bible says that everyone who lives a godly life will suffer persecution. These religious zealots did not even wait for Jesus to come to where they were; instead, they came out to him to argue with him and defend their religious turf.

Mar 8:12

**“he sighed deeply in his spirit.”** The word “spirit” is sometimes used to express an innermost part of a person or, more often in the case of God, when God is acting. In this case, Jesus’ “spirit” is simply a way of saying “sighed deeply within himself.” Some English versions try to make the English more understandable by translating the idiomatic use of “spirit” into more common English. Thus, the CJB says, “With a sigh that came straight from his heart.” The NIV simply says, “He sighed deeply,” and the NJB says “with a profound sigh.” The CEB tries to pick up some of the motion usually associated with the word “spirit” and says, “with an impatient sigh.”

The Pharisees had come to Jesus to test him and to ask him to do a spectacular sign. We can see how Jesus would have been frustrated and impatient with them, because he had done so many signs and miracles in the Galilee (he had just fed over 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish not too many miles away). Nevertheless, he was still hopeful he might reach some of them, along with the people he had not yet convinced of who he was (and he almost certainly would have been surrounded by people who were watching him closely). We can see why he would sigh deeply out of a mixture of frustration and hope, and then say that “no sign” would be given to them.

Mark’s record of this event gives us an important insight because the Gospel of Matthew records the same event but records Jesus as saying that no sign will be given to them except the sign of the prophet Jonah (Matt. 16:4; Jesus also said that in a different context in Matt. 12:39). The fact that Matthew and Mark differ in exactly what Jesus said is profound, because what Jesus actually said was almost certainly recorded in Matthew, while what Jesus effectively said to the Pharisees, given the fact that no sign he ever did convinced them of who he was, was that “no sign” would be given to them. Thus, there was a sign for them, the sign of the prophet Jonah, but “no sign” was given to them that they accepted as a genuine sign, including his being raised from the dead.

**“no sign will be given to this generation.”** The Greek is more literally, “If a sign were to be given to this generation….” If Jesus was speaking Greek, this would be an anacoluthon, an unfinished sentence that is filled in in the minds of the speaker or hearer. However, there is evidence that it was a Semitic idiom that was basically a denial, so the translation “no sign will be given” is warranted.

[See Word Study: “Anacoluthon.”]

Mar 8:14

**“And they had forgotten to bring bread.”** When Jesus and the apostles landed on the east side of the lake the apostles discovered they had forgotten to take food with them. Getting bread on the populated west and northwest side of the lake would have been easy, but not easy on the more deserted east side. So the apostles were concerned about forgetting food and thus misunderstood Jesus when he said to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod” (Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15).

**“one loaf.”** A “loaf” of the flatbread of the Bible was quite like a pancake, so only one loaf of bread would be like having one pancake for the twelve apostles and Jesus. The only thing the disciples had in the boat was one “loaf” of bread.

Mar 8:15

**“of the Pharisees.”** The Gospel of Matthew adds the Sadducees as well (Matt. 16:6); they had different doctrines but both were erroneous.

**“the leaven of Herod.”** There are various opinions about the meaning of the leaven of Herod, and there may be an element of truth in all of them, because Jesus was warning the apostles about things that would make their ministry ineffective or even against God. Both the Pharisees and Herod wanted “proof” (a sign) that Jesus was who he said he was, and both refused to believe the evidence that was right before their eyes. Also, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod all doubted who Jesus was and spoke lies about him (Herod, for example, said that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead). So each party failed to understand the ministry of Jesus or take the man and his ministry at face value as being from God. It is also interesting that Matthew says “Pharisees and Sadducees,” while Mark says “Pharisees and Herod.” One of Herod’s wives was Mariamne, the daughter of Simon who once was the High Priest and was a Sadducee, so the family of Herod was connected with the Sadducees by marriage.

Mar 8:16

**“with one another that they did not have *any* bread.”** Some Greek manuscripts read, “with one another, ‘we have no bread.’” That reading is somewhat closer to Matthew, but not identical to it. In any case, the difference makes no impact on the understanding of the event.

Mar 8:22

**“Bethsaida.”** That is, Bethsaida Julius, on the eastern side of the lake (the Sea of Galilee). It was not on the shore of the lake, showing that Jesus was still seeking to go to many places around the Galilee and spread the Good News. Philip the tetrarch had enlarged the village of Bethsaida Julius and named it after the daughter of Augustus Caesar. Bethsaida had always been a village even after it was enlarged. Josephus still refers to it as a village, and not a true city.[[54]](#footnote-13081) The fact that Bethsaida has always been a “village” and had only recently been enlarged explains why Mark calls it a “village.”

Mar 8:24

**“And regaining his sight.”** The participle here in Mark 8:24 is translated as “regaining his sight.” The translation is explained in the text note of the NET Bible: “The verb ἀναβλέπω [anablepō], though normally meaning ‘look up,’ when used in conjunction with blindness means ‘regain sight.’” (See the translations in the NET, NJB.)[[55]](#footnote-16130)

Mar 8:25

**“Then he laid his hands on his eyes again.”** This record of the healing of the blind man outside of Bethsaida is only in Mark. It seems unusual that it would only be recorded in Mark since it is the only healing or miracle in the Gospels in which Jesus laid hands on anyone twice in order for them to be healed, and the reason that Jesus did that is not explained in the text.

Mar 8:26

**“Do not even enter into the village.”** The Bible does not tell us why Jesus said this. Blindness did not make a person unclean, so that could not have been a reason. It seems therefore that the reason had to be personal; that the man himself had to have time to fully reflect on what had happened to him and not get swept away by an emotional crowd. Jesus’ healings were all personal, there is no set pattern to them. If this man needed time to fully appreciate what had happened to him, and also make plans for the future, Jesus would have wanted the man to make sure to take that time, and of course, rejoice with his own family.

Being able to see again would have given this man opportunities he had not had before, and it is certainly likely that loads of people would have had “good ideas” for him, but they were ideas that he and his family needed to work out without everyone else’s opinion.

Mar 8:27

**“the villages of Caesarea Philippi.”** The “villages of Caesarea Philippi” were the little villages around the major town of Caesarea Philippi.

Mar 8:28

**“And they said to him.”** The literal text is, “And they said to him, saying,” which is idiomatic and means “they said to him.”

**“Elijah.”** For information on why the people thought that Elijah would come, and why John the Baptist was called “Elijah,” see commentary on Matthew 17:10.

Mar 8:29

**“You are the Christ.”** This statement of Peter’s is in Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, and Luke 9:20.

Mar 8:31

**“the Son of Man must suffer many things.”** Now that the disciples know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:13-17; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21), Jesus begins to tell them that he must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. In spite of his clear teaching about it, however, they did not understand what he meant, and Peter even tried to stop Jesus from voicing it.

[For more on Jesus’ clear teaching that he would suffer and die, see commentary on Luke 18:34.]

**“after three days rise *from the dead*.”** Mark 8:31, along with quite a few other verses in the New Testament, is taken by some Christians to mean that Jesus raised himself from the dead. However, that is not the best way to understand this passage for quite a few reasons.

First, other times the Bible speaks of Jesus getting up from the dead it is the Father, God, who raises Jesus, he does not raise himself. Many verses plainly state that it was God who raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:32; 4:10; 5:30; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:9-10). Secondly, Jesus was a man, a human being (1 Tim. 2:5) so it would be impossible for him to raise himself from the dead. If he was truly dead he could not do that (Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10).

Thirdly, the Greek word that is translated as “rise” is *anastēnai* (#450 ἀναστῆναι), and it can mean to rise up, raise up, or get up. There is an important distinction that needs to be made between “rise up” and “raise up.” Typically, “rise up” is used when you (the subject) are rising up, and “raise up” is used when you (the subject) are raising up something else. Thus, if I am rescued out of a swimming pool, my body “rose up” but I was “raised” by someone else. Both are true simultaneously, however, “rise” is from an active perspective and “be raised” is from a passive perspective. This is important because although *anastēnai* in Mark 8:31 is an active infinitive, it does not necessarily mean that Jesus raised himself from the dead. Jesus’ body did “rise” (active) from the dead (if we take the meaning to be “rise”), but, as we will see, it rose because God raised it. Mark 8:31 does not tell us the cause, or, who raised Jesus from the dead, but just the result, that Jesus rose. It is from the rest of Scripture that we learn that God raised Jesus and thus his body did “rise.”

The two parallels, in Matthew 16:21 and Luke 9:22, both use the passive form when talking about Jesus’ resurrection, “be raised.” So, if we know that the parallels speak of Jesus being raised, in other words, someone else is doing the raising, then that should influence how we understand the active infinitive here in Mark 8:31. If both “rise” and “raise” are perfectly good options, and we know Jesus did not raise himself from the dead, we should understand the Greek text to mean “rise.” Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God (Acts 2:32, passive sense), and his body did rise (active sense). Both are true.

Lastly, the active form of “*anistēmi*” is used of other humans who certainly do not raise themselves from the dead (Mark 12:25) and carries the meaning of “rise” instead of “raise.” Therefore, Mark 8:31 is a remarkable prediction by Jesus that he will rise from the dead three days after he is killed, not that he will raise himself from the dead.

[For more on God being the one to raise Jesus from the dead, see commentary on John 10:17. For more information on dead people being dead in every way and not able to help themselves, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more information on Jesus not being God and therefore not being able to raise himself when he is dead, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

**“and after three days rise *from the dead*.”** The words “from the dead” are added for clarity. Jesus would be killed and rise after three days, “rise,” which would have to mean rise from the dead. This teaching of Jesus was very important and is repeated in Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, and Luke 9:22.

Mar 8:32

**“And he was speaking about this matter plainly.”** This statement is only in Mark, but it makes the important point that when Jesus spoke of being killed, he was not speaking in veiled language. Nevertheless, the apostles did not understand what he meant.

**“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”** The record of Peter rebuking Jesus is only in Matthew and Mark.

Mar 8:33

**“Get behind me, Adversary.”** See commentary on Matthew 16:23.

**“thinking about.”** The Greek *phronein* means to have in mind something that sways the thinking.[[56]](#footnote-25903)

Mar 8:34

**“And calling the crowd to himself.”** This record is in Matthew 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-9:1; and Luke 9:23-27. Matthew says Jesus is speaking with his disciples, which was the major intent of what he was saying, however, Mark and Luke point out that the multitude was there also and was listening to this part of what he was teaching. What Jesus taught about him being the Messiah and suffering and dying was only taught to the disciples, which is why for this teaching he had to call the multitude to him.

**“he must.”** In this context, the Greek imperative verb is best translated “he must,” not “let him” (see commentary on Matt. 16:24).

**“take up his cross.”** The follower of Christ must be willing to suffer for Christ.

[For more on the meaning of “take up his cross,” see commentary on Matt. 16:24.]

**“he must deny himself and must take up his cross, and *then* follow me.”** The first two things, denying oneself and taking one’s cross are aorist imperatives, while the “follow me” is a present imperative. So to be a true follower of Jesus Christ one must deny themself and take up their cross and then they are qualified to genuinely follow Jesus.

Mar 8:35

**“life” (2x).** The Greek word is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” The Greek word has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it refers to the physical life of the body, which is why most versions translate it “life,” which is accurate in this context.

[See commentary on Matthew 16:25. For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’”]

**“because of me.”** For an explanation of this phrase, see the commentary on Matthew 5:11.

Mar 8:36

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē*, as in Mark 8:35. It is used twice in verse 35 of the life of the body, and it is expanded in this verse to be life in general, both here and the hereafter, which is why many versions translate it “life” in Mark 8:35 but “soul” in Mark 8:36 and 8:37. It is better to translate the word the same way in Mark 8:35, 36, and 8:37 and point out that “life” can be just our physical life or our physical and everlasting life

[For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’”]

Mar 8:37

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē*, the same as in Mark 8:35 and 8:36. See commentary on Mark 8:36.

**Mark Chapter 9**

Mar 9:1

**“will absolutely not taste death.”** Mark 9:1 is a continuation of what Jesus taught in Mark 8:34-38, just as it is in Matthew 16:24-28, and Mark 9:1 should not have been a new chapter but instead should be thought of as Mark 8:39, the last verse in Mark clchapter 8. Jesus was teaching that people must live with such a mindset that they would be ready to give up their life for Jesus’ sake, and that Jesus was coming back soon (Matt. 16:27), and that is why he said that “some” of the people in his audience would not die before they saw the “the Kingdom of God come with power.”

[For more information on what Jesus was teaching, see commentary on Matt. 16:28.]

**“they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power.”** This text is not just saying that these people will see the kingdom as it comes, but they will see it after it has come.

Mar 9:2

**“Peter and James and John.”** Thus there are three witnesses to the Transformation.

**“led them by themselves up onto a high mountain.”** Jesus and the apostles were at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27), which is at the base of Mount Hermon. The Transfiguration would have been on one of the mountain peaks of “Mount Hermon,” which is actually a range of peaks that runs for over thirty miles, basically from north to south. Mount Hermon is so high that the snow at the top never melts, and it is sparsely populated even to this day, so it was a great place for Jesus, with Peter, James, and John, to be alone.

As far as historians can tell, the idea of the traditional site of the Transfiguration being Mount Tabor originated in AD 326. That year, Queen Helena, Emperor Constantine’s mother, had a vision that Mount Tabor was where the Transfiguration occurred. However, the text of Scripture indicates otherwise. Mount Tabor is much more centrally located in Israel, and the top is quite small. It is likely that it was accepted as the site for the Transfiguration because it was “apart” from other mountains, rising out of the plain, and furthermore, it was easy for pilgrims to get to. But Jesus would have had to travel south for quite some distance to get to Mount Tabor from Caesarea Philippi, and once there and on the top, he would have no guarantee that he would be alone. For one thing, there was a fort on top of Mount Tabor at the time of Christ, which makes Mount Tabor a most unlikely location.

More evidence that Mount Hermon is the Transfiguration site is that after Peter’s statement that Jesus was the Christ and the discussion that followed (Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 8:27-9:1; Luke 9:18-27), which took place at Caesarea Phillipi, the Gospel of Luke says, “he [Jesus] took with him Peter and John and James, and went up onto the mountain to pray. The fact that the text just says “the” mountain, strongly supports that Mount Hermon is the mountain on which the Transfiguration took place. If one is at Caesarea Philippi, which is at the very base of Mount Hermon, then “the” mountain is Mount Hermon, not some mountain over 40 miles away.

**“transformed.”** The event described as the “Transfiguration” is recorded in three Gospels (Matt. 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). For an explanation of the Transfiguration, see commentary on Matthew 17:2.

Mar 9:6

**“say.”** The Greek is *apokrithē* (#611 ἀποκριθῇ), technically, “answer,” but in this case, he was “answering” the situation, not a question. Hendriksen states: “Here, as in verse 5 and often, the verb ἀποκριθῇ has a wide meaning, so that τί ἀποκριθῇ means, “what he should say,” or “what to say.”[[57]](#footnote-18683)

Mar 9:9

**“from among the dead.”**[[58]](#footnote-28077) See commentary on Romans 4:24.

Mar 9:10

**“And they kept the matter to themselves, discussing…”** The disciples did not expect Jesus to be killed and then raised from the dead. That is simply not what most first-century Jews believed about the Messiah, so they did not understand what Jesus was speaking of when he spoke of being raised from the dead (see commentary on Luke 18:34).

Mar 9:11

**“Elijah.”** John the Baptist was “Elijah.” See commentary on Matthew 17:10.

Mar 9:12

**“come first to restore.”** If the text is to be translated and understood as if John did restore everything, then the restoration has to refer to a spiritual restoration. However, it seems apparent that John did not restore everything. In fact, that John did not manage to restore everything sets the stage for Jesus’ question, “why is it written about the Son of Man that he must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?” In other words, the disciples need to understand that John did not restore everything, which is one reason the Messiah must suffer and die.

It is a well-known aspect of Semitic languages that an active verb can represent an attempt to do something, not an accomplishment of something. In other words, instead of John “restoring” everything, he “tried” to restore everything. This use of the Hebrew verb is well documented and even appears in places such as the “Hints and Helps to Bible Interpretation” section in the front of *Young’s Concordance* (hint #70). Young’s has, “Active verbs frequently express only an attempt to do the action,” and one of the examples it gives is Matthew 17:11 about Elijah restoring everything. For clarity, the REV uses the translation “to restore,” in place of the participle “restoring,” which is in the Greek text. It is because of the Semitic idiom that versions such as the ESV, NRSV, and RSV, say “to restore all things.” John came to restore all things, but could not accomplish that task, which is a reason that Jesus had to suffer and die.

**“and *yet.*”**[[59]](#footnote-21758) Jesus was asking the question, without answering it, how it could be that if Elijah came and restored everything, there was any need for the suffering of the Messiah. The disciples did not believe that the Messiah would die (and did not truly understand that until after his resurrection). Thus, Jesus is just trying to get them to open their mind to other possibilities for the Messiah than they had learned in Synagogue. The question is a good one, because although the death of the Messiah was veiled to the disciples, the fact that he would suffer should have been clear to them. But why even that if John did indeed restore all things? The restoration of John was a spiritual restoration, turning people’s hearts back to God. It was not a political restoration, or a full restoration in which the Devil and his minions were defeated, all the people turned to God, and the curse removed from the earth.

Mar 9:13

**“just as it is written about him.”** In the comparison between Elijah and John the Baptist, the things that were written about how Elijah was treated are brought forward to John the Baptist just like the name “Elijah” was brought forward to apply to John. Although “Elijah” (John the Baptist) in Malachi 4 is not foretold to be treated with contempt, since the prophet Elijah was treated with contempt in the Old Testament, we would expect John, who was called Elijah, to be treated with contempt in the New Testament.

[For more on John the Baptist being called “Elijah,” see commentary on Matt. 17:10.]

Mar 9:14

**“And when they came to the disciples.”** The record of the healing of the epileptic boy is in Matthew 17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29, and Luke 9:37-43. Luke tells us that this event happened the day after the Transfiguration (Luke 9:37).

**“and experts in the law disputing with them.”** The crowd was not disputing with the nine disciples Jesus had left at Caesarea Philippi; rather, it was the experts in the law, likely Pharisees, who were disputing with the disciples, as this event occurred so deep in the Galilee.

The man had brought his epileptic son to the disciples, and they could not cast out the demon (Mark 9:18).

Mar 9:15

**“very excited.”** For the definition “very excited,” see BDAG, and see the CEB. The people were excited to see Jesus because of what they had seen him do and his reputation. Although most versions read “amazed,” there is no particular reason that the crowd would be “amazed” here. Jesus was not doing any miracles at this time, he simply had come down from Mount Hermon.

Mar 9:16

**“What are you disputing with them *about*?”** Note that the “experts in the Law” did not answer Jesus’ question to them. They were brave and bold around his young apostles but did not have the courage to speak up to Jesus. Sadly, that scenario is typical for people who are bullies and cowards at heart. They will bully people they can, but suddenly disappear when someone who can legitimately challenge them comes on the scene.

Mar 9:17

**“I brought my son to you.”** That was the man’s intention, but when he got to where the apostles were, Jesus was gone. So he asked the disciples to cast out the demon, but they could not.

Mar 9:18

**“And I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they were not strong enough.”** This gives us a window into what the experts in the Law were disputing with Jesus’ disciples about. If the man brought his epileptic son to the disciples to cast out the demon, no doubt they would have tried to do it using the only tools they knew, some formula, and perhaps even the name of Jesus himself. But that would not be acceptable to the experts in the Law, who had their own formulas and “names” by which they tried to cast out demons (cf. Acts 4:7). The “experts” would have been delighted that Jesus’ disciples could not cast out the demon because they looked for any way available to discredit Jesus.

**“strong enough.”** The Greek is *ischuō* (#2480 ἰσχύω), which means strength. This verse gives us a glimpse into the spiritual battle that can wage when demons live inside a body. It takes spiritual strength to cast them out. That strength comes from trust (Matt. 17:20), which is connected to one’s prayer life (Mark 9:29). Another example of strength in the spiritual battle is Revelation 12:8. The Devil and his demons wanted to remain in heaven, but they were not strong enough to fight against Michael and the angels. To say the apostles “could not” cast out the demon is correct, but not helpful because then we have no idea why. The Greek is more helpful, saying that the spirit did not come out because the apostles were not spiritually strong enough. Spiritual power in the life of a believer is usually not a matter of either having it or not; it is usually a matter of how much power one has, and do we have enough to get the job at hand done for the Lord.

Mar 9:20

**“the boy.”** The Greek uses the pronouns, “he” and “him,” but those can be confusing, so the text has been clarified for the reader.

**“immediately it threw the boy into a convulsion.”** Demons are vindictive and cruel. He knew Jesus could cast him out, so he tried to hurt the child any way he could before he left. That behavior is typical of demons and demonic people—people who are possessed by demons or are in allegiance with them; servants of Satan.

Mar 9:21

**“how long.”** The Greek is more literally, “how long a time,” but we would simply say “how long.”

**“How long has this been happening to him?**” This question is unique. It is the only time in all of Jesus’ healing miracles that Jesus asked how long the person was sick. Jesus obviously received revelation to ask the question, but the Bible does not say why, although there may have been one reason or multiple reasons for it. Perhaps it was to ascertain the kind of emotional pain the family had endured. Perhaps, as Lenski suggests, it was to point out to the man that as long as the problem had existed, he had not gotten any help from any other source, but now Jesus would help him.[[60]](#footnote-27984) Or perhaps he asked the question to make it clear to the crowd how long the boy had been sick and thus by healing him he gave hope to others who had been sick a long time and were discouraged about ever getting well. There was a fair amount of malaria in that part of Galilee and many people had been sick for years. We do not know for sure why Jesus asked the question, but it does emphasize the fact that every healing and miracle is different. There is no “magic formula.” Every healing requires God’s power and the minister to walk by revelation.

Mar 9:22

**“if you are able to do anything.”** The man obviously knows Jesus can do some miracles. The question he is asking is “Are you strong enough to fight this spirit and cast it out?” After all, he said the disciples were not strong enough to cast it out.

Mar 9:23

**“*What do you mean*, ‘If you are able to?’”** The Greek text is simply, “if you are able to.” There are two different ways the phrase can be understood. The most accepted way is that Jesus is repeating the man’s words because the man questioned Jesus, and Jesus was saying, “How can you be questioning me when you can see the miracles that I do?” However, the phrase can also be taken as Jesus throwing the man’s question back onto the man, and saying, “No, if YOU are able to,” meaning the man has to believe in the power of God in order to see God’s miracles in his life.

**“All things are possible for the one who believes.”** This is not a “blanket statement,” that all you have to do is believe and anything at all will be done for you. It is clear from the rest of Scripture, and even in Jesus’ life, that what is being said is that once God makes His will known and gives you revelation about something, then all you do is believe God’s revelation and what God said will be done. We must be careful not to read ourselves into this verse or to understand this verse as “All things are guaranteed to the one who believes.” Instead, Jesus is assuring the father of this epileptic boy about the power of God. With revelation and belief, or trust, God can do anything.

Mar 9:25

**“subdued.”** The Greek word translated “subdued” is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω). In this context, *epitimaō* has a technical meaning: it is used in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon (see commentary on Mark 1:25).

Mar 9:27

**“Jesus, taking him by the hand, lifted him up and he stood up.”** There are two things going on here: Jesus lifted and the boy stood. The boy seemed to be dead, so Jesus lifted him up. But in that weakened state, if Jesus had let go of the boy he would have dropped back to the ground. So we see that as Jesus lifted the boy up his body was energized with strength; “and he stood up.”

Mar 9:29

**“by anything except prayer.”** This statement does not mean that one has to pray before casting the demon out of the person. Jesus did not take the time to pray. It means to be effective in delivering people from demons, one must live an obedient life before God, which includes much prayer.

Some Greek texts have “prayer and fasting,” but textual research available today shows that the phrase “and fasting” was added to the original text.

Mar 9:31

**“is going to be handed over.”** The Greek is *paradidōmi* (#3860 παραδίδωμι), and in this context, it means to give into the hands of another; to deliver up treacherously; by betrayal to cause someone to be taken. It is present tense, but is an example of the “prophetic present,” meaning the present tense is stated, but it is prophetic of something that will happen in the future. Thus, some versions render the verb, “will be delivered over” or something similar. The prophetic present has “the note of certain expectation,”[[61]](#footnote-18596) because it is spoken as if the action is occurring at that very time. Jesus’ betrayal was not far away.

[For more on the idioms of the prophetic present and prophetic perfect, see the commentary on Luke 3:9 and Ephesians 2:6.]

**“he will rise *from the dead*.”** This is not saying that Jesus raises himself from the dead, but instead, only that Jesus will rise from the dead. The person who is doing the raising is not specified in this verse.

[For more on this phrase, see commentary on Mark 8:31.]

Mar 9:32

**“But they did not understand the saying.”** Jesus taught about his suffering, death, and resurrection many times. However, in spite of Jesus’ clearly stating he would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead, the disciples never understood what he meant. This gives us some very important insight into how the Jews at the time of Jesus viewed their Messiah. Just as they never expected a virgin birth (note Mary’s reaction to the angel’s message in Luke 1:34), they never expected their Messiah to suffer and die. This verse and others, such as Luke 18:34, make that plain. Even after his death and resurrection, upon seeing the empty tomb, they did not understand what had happened (John 20:9). It took Jesus personally appearing to a number of people for the disciples to believe he had been raised from the dead. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:16), then to the women who came to the tomb (Matt. 28:9), then to Peter (this appearing is not recorded in Scripture; we are only told that it happened; Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5); then to the two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31), then to the disciples as a group (Luke 24:36ff). Even with all that evidence, Thomas, who was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared, still did not believe until he had personally seen the resurrected Lord (John 20:26-28). Ultimately, it took both understanding the Scriptures and seeing the resurrected Christ to fully confirm their belief in the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:45; and see commentary on Matt. 16:21).

Mar 9:33

**“And when he was in the house.”** Lenski says, “ ‘in the house’ with its definite article means the house or home of Jesus.”[[62]](#footnote-26215) Thus this verse could well be translated, “When he was at home.” People are so convinced that Jesus was poor that they do not consider that Jesus could have owned a home, but there is no reason he could not have, even if many people contributed to it.

**“arguing about.”** The Greek could also be “discussing,” but it is likely that since the young men were speaking about who was the greatest among them it was at least a somewhat heated discussion or small argument.

Mar 9:34

**“greatest.”** This record occurs in Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; and Luke 9:46-48. The word translated “greatest” is actually the comparative “greater.” The argument was about who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:1). (See commentary on Luke 9:46).

Mar 9:36

**“him.”** This same account is in Matthew 18:2 and Luke 9:47. The text does not give us the sex of the child but culturally it would have been a boy that Jesus would set “in the midst” of a group of men. Jesus would have been more respectful in the culture than to pick up someone’s little girl and set her in the middle of a group of men, and in fact, that a little girl would be in his immediate audience is possible but not probable.

That there would be other people and children in the house with Jesus and the apostles makes perfect sense. Jesus would have been almost surrounded by people everywhere he went. The fact that Jesus had people around him all the time (and others traveled in groups as well) was so “common” and “ordinary” that the other people are almost never mentioned. We see this all over the Bible. For example, when Abraham sent his servant to Padan-aram to get a wife for Isaac we could read almost the entire record and never know that the servant traveled with other men except that Genesis 24:32 mentions them. Similarly, when Mary went from Galilee to Judea to see Elizabeth, there is no hint in the record that Mary traveled with other people and men to protect her. However, in the culture, it would have been unheard of to let a young woman travel alone for what was at least a three-day journey (and was more likely five or six days). The people who traveled with Mary are not mentioned simply because they did not need to be—everyone knew they were there. That is the situation here in Mark 9:36. Jesus was not alone in the house with just the apostles, there would have been others there, including children.

Mar 9:37

**“Whoever receives a child like this one in my name receives me.”** The child mortality rate at the time Jesus lived was quite high, and that was just one reason that children were not held in high esteem but were often considered almost ancillary to the family until they could be genuinely productive. The children were loved, but not treated particularly well.

**“*only...also*.”** When a person receives Christ, he receives God as well. For more on this idiomatic way of speaking, see commentary on 1 John 3:18.

Mar 9:40

**“For whoever is not against us is for us.”** This is said in the opposite way (and perhaps more clearly) in Matthew 12:30: “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters” (cf. Luke 11:23). Although they are worded differently, both have the same message and neither statement allows for a neutral ground. There is no neutrality in the spiritual battle: we are either for or against God.

Both ways of saying that people were either for you or against you were attested in the ancient world, and Jesus’ disciples were no doubt familiar with the concepts. The world in ancient times was very tough and there were many situations in which neutrality was not acceptable and people had to choose which side they were on. When the Roman philosopher Cicero (106-43 BC) defended the people of Pompeii to Caesar, he quoted Caesar’s own words back to him, saying to Caesar, “Let that maxim of yours, which won you your victory, hold good. For we have often heard you say that, while we considered all who were not with us as our enemies, you considered all who were not against you as your friends.”[[63]](#footnote-12061)

We are all either “for” or “against” God and Jesus. If we are not “against” him then we are for him. If we are not “with” him then we are against him. Someone might say, “Well, I am not against him, but I am not ‘for’ him either.” That statement only shows an ignorance of the spiritual battle and the reality behind the spiritual battle. God created the world, and us, and He demands our allegiance. Someone who is unwilling to recognize God to the point of getting saved is an enemy of God and will end up in Gehenna. Someone who recognizes God to the point of getting saved is part of the Kingdom of God. There is no place where “neutral people” go on the Day of Judgment. The sheep go into the Kingdom, the goats into the Lake of Fire. Being unwilling to commit to being “for” or “against” God is actually part of the Devil’s plot to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Especially to our modern ears, not being for or against something sounds so reasonable and good-natured that it is easy to think that God must be some kind of ogre for demanding that we believe in Him. But in the End, we will not be able to sweep under the rug the fact that He is our creator, and He created us for a purpose; a purpose that is intertwined with His own purposes, and if we do not want to support Him, then we are in fact against Him.

There is a story about a man who was sitting on a fence, with the Devil on one side and God on the other. God and the Devil were both trying to get the man to come down off the fence to their side. The arguments and pleas went on hour after hour, but the man would not make a decision or come down from the fence. At the end of the day, God went home to heaven and the Devil said to the man, “OK, come down and come with me.” The man said, “But I am still on the fence; I have not made a decision yet.” The Devil replied, “Come down. You obviously don’t understand. I own the fence.” How true. In reality, there is no fence. There is no “place” for people who say they are “neutral” because there are no “neutral” people. People who are for God will be in the future Kingdom of Christ. People who are against God will be in the Lake of Fire. Those are the only two futures for humankind (see commentary on Rom. 6:23).

Mar 9:41

**“in my name.”** The “my” is not specifically in the text but is implied.

Mar 9:42

**“huge millstone.”** The Greek literally reads, “millstone of a donkey,” and it refers to the large commercial millstones, which weighed many hundreds of pounds and were turned by donkeys or oxen. There would be no point in tying a commercial millstone to anyone’s neck and throwing him in the water—any much smaller weight would do the job. Jesus is using hyperbole to make his point. Most translations do not point out that this verse is speaking about the huge commercial millstones and not the standard household millstone that women used to grind the household grain.

[For more on millstones, see commentary on Deut. 24:6.]

**“lake.”** From the context, Jesus was teaching in Capernaum, right beside the Sea of Galilee, which is actually a lake (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

Mar 9:43

**“Gehenna**.” See commentary on Matthew 5:22.

[For information on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

**“life.”** This refers to the Life in the Age to Come, and it is equivalent to entering the Kingdom of God (Mark 9:47). See commentary on Luke 10:28.

**“unquenchable fire.”** That the fire is “unquenchable” does not mean that it will never burn out, it means that it cannot be purposely put out until the fuel is gone and it burns out on its own (see commentary on Mark 9:48).

Mar 9:44

This entire verse (and Mark 9:46) was an addition to the text, and so is omitted in the REV, and it is omitted in many other modern versions as well. Metzger simply comments that these verses are “lacking in important early witnesses” [i.e., manuscripts] and “were added by copyists from v. 48.”[[64]](#footnote-18473) In other words, the evidence that this verse, as well as verse 46, were added by copyists is so strong that it is not even debated by scholars. See commentary on Mark 9:48.

Mar 9:45

**“Gehenna.”** See commentary on Matthew 5:22.

[For information on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

**“life.”** The Greek is literally, “the life,” which refers to the life in the Age to Come, that is “everlasting life.” See commentary on Luke 10:28.

Mar 9:46

This entire verse (and Mark 9:44) was an addition to the text, and so is omitted in the REV, just as it is omitted in many other modern versions as well. Metzger simply comments that these verses are “lacking in important early witnesses” [i.e., manuscripts] and “were added by copyists from v. 48.”[[65]](#footnote-31500) In other words, the evidence that this verse, as well as verse 44, were added by copyists is so strong that it is not even debated by scholars. See commentary on Mark 9:48.

Mar 9:47

**“gouge it out.”** The Greek is literally, “throw it out,” but we would say “gouge it out.” Christ’s making this point is important, and occurs three times (Matt. 5:29; 18:9; and Mark 9:47).

**“Gehenna.”** See commentary on Matthew 5:22.

[For information on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Mar 9:48

**“their worm does not die.”** This verse is quoted from Isaiah 66:24, and it has been used to prove that people “burn in hell forever,” but that is not what it is teaching (see commentary on Isa. 66:24). Both in Isaiah and here in Mark, it is teaching that unsaved people are totally destroyed. Jesus specifically uses the word Gehenna, which is where people will be destroyed (Mark 9:47), while Isaiah does not mention the place, but simply says people will “go out” (of the city) and see the dead bodies. We know from the book of Revelation that the destruction of the wicked will occur in the Lake of Fire (see Rev. 20:14-15).

Gehenna was the garbage dump of Jerusalem. All kinds of garbage, and even dead animals, were thrown into Gehenna and destroyed. The fires in the valley burned up everything that could be burned, and the maggots and worms ate up the vegetable and animal waste. Everyone in Christ’s audience knew this. No one thought that the wood, rags, or other burnables that had been thrown into Gehenna burned forever in the valley, or that animal and vegetable garbage lasted forever, eternally being consumed by worms. Christ’s point in comparing the Valley of Gehenna to the future Lake of Fire was graphic and clear: if a person was thrown into Gehenna on the Day of Judgment, he would never be restored, he would be totally consumed; he would be annihilated.

One thing that helps us understand Jesus’ teaching is knowing that Isaiah 66:24 is not speaking of living people suffering, but dead bodies in the process of being destroyed. This is clear from paying attention to the context and vocabulary of the verse. Isaiah 66:24 says, “They will go out and look on the dead bodies of the people who have transgressed against me; for their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all humankind.” From this, we can see that this verse is not talking about living people being tortured. It is talking about dead people being totally destroyed.

In reading Isaiah chapter 66, we can see that the closing verses are about God’s judgment on the wicked, and how He will destroy them with fire and sword (Isa. 66:16). This is a general picture of God’s judgment, and could refer to either the Battle of Armageddon just before the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 19:19-21) or to the Final War at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:7-10), or even to both. At some point after the battles, the unrighteous people go to the place where God has thrown the bodies of the unsaved, and they are all dead, they are not suffering. Isaiah said the righteous will look upon the “dead bodies,” and the Hebrew word *peger* (#06297 פֶּגֶר) is always used of dead bodies, never living ones. Those dead bodies were being consumed by worms and fire, and eventually would be completely gone. So we see that Isaiah is not portraying the suffering of the wicked, but their final fate: destruction.

When Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:24 in his teaching, he quoted it to reinforce his point, which was the same point that Isaiah was making: that there is no restitution for the wicked, only complete annihilation. Jesus was not modifying or correcting what Isaiah wrote. Rather, Jesus was teaching about Gehenna, and quoted Isaiah to help emphasize the point he was making about the destruction of the wicked. In another teaching, Jesus made it clear that God would destroy both “body and soul” in Gehenna (Matt. 10:28).

The phrase, “their worm does not die,” does not mean the worms never die. “Immortal worms” would not have made sense to anyone in biblical times. Neither Isaiah nor Jesus was teaching or explaining a new doctrine that worms somehow lived forever. This is not picturing everlasting torment, but rather that the worms and fire will not stop until everything in Gehenna has been annihilated. People who vermapost (that is, compost by using worms), are very familiar with the fact that as long as they keep adding garbage to the worm bins, the worms there do not die off, but multiply. Individual worms die, but collectively the worms eat and multiply until all their food is gone, at which point they starve and die. Of course, there cannot be literal worms, as we know worms, in Gehenna, because they could not survive, so they may just be a metaphor for total destruction, but it is possible that God would miraculously keep worms alive to be part of the destruction of the wicked. Most orthodox teachers do not believe the worms are literal, but believe they are a figure to portray horrible suffering. However, as we saw, the people were “dead bodies,” they were not alive so they were not suffering. Many of the “worms” eating the rotting flesh and food are maggots, and the NLT version reads “maggots.”

[For more information on Gehenna, see commentary on Matt. 5:22.]

**“and the fire is not extinguished.”** Just as the phrase “the worm does not die” does not mean that there are “immortal worms,” but rather means that the worms will eat until there is no more food, the phrase “is not extinguished,” does not mean the fire burns forever, it means it is never purposely put out. Firemen today are very familiar with house fires that “cannot be extinguished,” and do not go out until the house is consumed to ash. We disagree with Lenski and other commentators who insist that these words portray everlasting torment. For example, Lenski writes, “A fire that is ‘unquenchable’ is by that very fact eternal.”[[66]](#footnote-13546) That is not accurate. The text simply states the fire is “not quenched.” No one puts the fire out, but that does not mean the fire does not go out when the fuel is gone.

God uses the word “quenched” (or “extinguished”) for fires (or anger) that cannot be extinguished but will go out on its own a number of times in the Bible. Many verses support the idea that “not quenched” simply means that no one can put the fire out until it burns out. Ezekiel 20:47 speaks of God causing a fire in the forest in the Negev and says, “the blazing flame will not be quenched,” but that does not mean that the woods of the Negev will burn forever, they will burn until the trees are burned up. Jeremiah 17:27 is a prophecy of Jerusalem that if the people do not obey God and keep the Sabbath holy, “I will kindle a fire in its [Jerusalem’s] gates, and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it will not be quenched.” The palaces in Jerusalem do not burn forever. No one can “quench” the fire in them; they will burn until they are gone.

God also uses the word “quench” with the same meaning for fires and anger. God speaks of His anger that cannot be “quenched,” meaning that people cannot put it out, but it will eventually die out. For example, because of the idolatry of Judah, God said His anger would not be “quenched” (2 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 34:25; Jer. 7:20; 17:27). Indeed, Judah was destroyed by Babylon and the people carried into captivity, but eventually God’s anger died down and Judah returned from captivity to the Promised Land. So God’s anger could not be “quenched,” but it could stop, and that is what will happen in Gehenna. It will take a very long time, but eventually, the fire of Gehenna will burn out.

So the biblical and lexical evidence is that “not quenched” does not mean “eternal” but rather means it cannot be put out until the fuel burns out. The phrase “not quenched” would only refer to a fire that burned forever if the other biblical evidence showed that the fuel for the fire lasted forever, but the other biblical evidence supports the eventual destruction of the wicked. When people are thrown into Gehenna after they are judged on the Day of Judgment, the fire there will not be able to be put out, and the worms there will not die until there is nothing left to consume and all the sinners have been annihilated.

The Bible does not describe people’s suffering in the Lake of Fire, it simply notes that there will be some suffering there. Nevertheless, as the teaching about “eternal hell” continued to be developed and embellished throughout Church history, there was a tremendous fascination and emphasis on “hell.” This is well represented in Christian art through the centuries and in literature such as the epic poem, *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (the first part of which is titled “Inferno,” which is Italian for “Hell”). It is worth noting that there was such a fascination with hell that somehow the phrase about the worm not dying and the fire not being quenched was added two more times in some manuscripts of Mark. Thus, both Mark 9:44 and 9:46 were added to some manuscripts, but those two occurrences are not in the original text and are not in most modern Bibles.

[For information on the dead being dead until the resurrection, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on the annihilation of the dead, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.” For more on the two destinies of humankind, see commentary on Rom. 6:23. For more on the worm and fire, see commentary on Isa. 66:24. For more information on Gehenna, see commentary on Matt. 5:22. For more information on “Hell” and Hades, see commentary on Rev. 20:13.]

Mar 9:50

**“if the salt has become unsalty.”** For how salt can become unsalty, see commentary on Matthew 5:13.

**“how can it be made salty *again*?”** To understand why Jesus would say this, we have to remember the context of this statement. Jesus has just finished talking about how we must remove causes to sin because the alternative is destruction in the fire of Gehenna (cf. Mark 9:43, 45, 47). So, when Jesus says, after the salt has become unsalty, “How can you make it salty *again*,” the implied answer is that you cannot. He goes on to say in the parallel in Matthew 5:13 that it is not useful for anything but to be trampled under people’s feet. He says this because that is the true reality of salt in the real world, and it helps communicate a thought that Jesus wanted to convey about not being able to be restored from the fire of Gehenna.

In biblical times, and still to an extent in modern times, a major source of salt was the marshes along the seashore where evaporated salt water left salt deposits. The salt, which was not pure, was sometimes stored in houses or left on the ground, and in both cases, it can become ruined, thus “unsalty.” William Thomson details a story eerily similar to what we find Jesus describing here in Mark 9:50. “These houses have merely earthen floors [i.e., have only dirt floors], and the salt next [to] the ground in a few years [is] entirely spoiled. I saw large quantities of it literally thrown into the street, to be trodden underfoot of men and beasts.”[[67]](#footnote-25471) This thought is parallel to the idea of Gehenna; no one can be restored from the fire of Gehenna, it is the everlasting destruction of the unbeliever (2 Thess. 1:9), the unsalty.

Here is the meaning of the metaphor: Everyone will be seasoned with fire (Mark 9:49), some people will be salty (believers) and will be a pleasing sacrifice to God (Lev. 2:13). They have salt in themselves (Mark 9:50). The rest will also be seasoned with fire, yet they are not “salty” because their salt has lost its taste, they will not be a pleasing sacrifice to God (Lev. 2:13) and will be destroyed in the fire of Gehenna (Mark 9:43, 45).

[For more on how salt can become “unsalty,” see commentary on Matt. 5:13. For more on annihilation in Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

**“Have salt in yourselves.”** This obscure saying is connected to both the salt covenant and to the fact that every burnt sacrifice that was offered to God was salted with salt. The salt covenant was a way to make a binding agreement between people. The salt covenant is sometimes known as the “friendship covenant” because even when enemies ate salt together they were bound by the covenant to help and protect each other. It was not always possible to eat a meal together and so have “peace” (the Hebrew is “*shalom*” and means more than just “peace,” it means well-being), but if people had salt in themselves they would have *shalom* with those they met. Followers of Jesus are, like him, to be as much at peace with the world around them as it is possible to be (cf. Rom. 12:18).

[For more on the salt covenant, see commentary on 2 Chron. 13:5. For more on sacrifices and offerings being offered with salt, see Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:17-19; and see commentary on Lev. 2:13.]

**“one another.”** The phrase “one another” occurs in the context of the community of believers, and while we are to be good to everyone, in the context of the New Testament Epistles, the commands toward “one another” are specifically to other believers. For example, Christians are to be “especially good to the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). It is very important for the richness of our lives together here on earth, for our personal growth here on earth, and for rewards in the next life, that each Christian needs to be “other-focused,” focused on others and how we can help them. The phrase “one another” occurs many times in the New Testament, stating and reinforcing that truth.

[For more on the “one another” commands, see commentary on Gal. 5:13, “one another.” For more on “love one another,” see commentary on John 13:34.]

**Mark Chapter 10**

Mar 10:1

**“And he set out from there.”** The fact that Mark 10:1 starts with, “And he set out from there,” makes it seem like he was going from Capernaum (Mark 9:33), but that is not the case. One of the things that Bible readers must become accustomed to is that the word “and” simply means there is a flow in the story from the author’s perspective. Jesus did go from Capernaum to the Transjordan, the land East of the Jordan River (Mark 10:1), but not before he went through Samaria to Jerusalem and then to the Transjordan. In fact, the entire record of Luke 9:51-18:14 occurs between Mark 9:50 and Mark 10:1. The phrase “beyond the Jordan” refers to Perea, the portion of the kingdom of Herod the Great occupying the eastern side of the Jordan River valley.

Mar 10:2

**“Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?”** This record in Mark contains the same event recorded in Matthew 19, but with different details. When the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark cover the same event, Mark usually has a more abbreviated version of the event, as is the case here. To properly understand what Jesus said, it is important for us to know the full question the Pharisees asked, but Mark only records part of their question. Mark records the Pharisees’ question as, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” However, Matthew records the full question as, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

The background of the question was the ongoing debate between the rabbis at that time about divorce. The school of Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason, while the school of Shammai taught that divorce was only called for in the case of sexual immorality. The Pharisees, who were followers of the school of Hillel, thought a man could divorce his wife for any reason, and it is likely that there were some of the Pharisees in the group talking with Jesus who had divorced their wives without good cause based on that teaching.

When we understand the rabbinic debate, and the question the Pharisees asked, we are in a position to understand Jesus’ answer in Mark 10:11-12. See commentary on Matthew 19:3 and the commentary on Mark 10:11.

Mar 10:7

Mark 10:7 is quoted from Genesis 2:24 in the Septuagint (the “LXX”). The Hebrew text differs slightly from the LXX. This occurs again in Ephesians 5:31. Matthew 19:5 is similar, but uses a different word for “joined.”

**“be joined to.”** The Greek is *proskollaō* (#4347 προσκολλάω), and it literally means to glue to. See commentary on Ephesians 5:31, which uses the same Greek word and quotes the same Old Testament verse.

Mar 10:10

**“about this matter.”** Jesus had a conversation with the Pharisees about marriage and divorce, which is recorded in Matthew (see the commentaries on Matt. 19:3 and 19:9). What Jesus said, however, was of such interest to the disciples that they asked him “about this matter.” It seems that the disciples were so steeped in the culture of the day that they had just accepted divorce and remarriage as part of life (as many people have today), and were shocked at the way Jesus defended the sanctity of marriage. The Gospel of Mark leaves out the full conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees and goes forward to an event that Matthew does not mention, and that is that Jesus spoke privately to his disciples about what he had said to the Pharisees. The disciples had waited until they were all back at a house and in private before bringing up this matter. Jesus occasionally taught his disciples in private in houses (cf. Mark 7:17; 9:28, 33; 10:10).

Mar 10:11

**“commits adultery against her.”** The context of this statement that Jesus made to his disciples is the Pharisees’ question to him, which is partially given in Mark 10:2, but fully given in Matthew 19:3 (see commentaries on Mark 10:2 and Matt. 19:3). The Pharisees were asking Jesus about the teaching of the school of Hillel, that a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all. The social context and the question are specific, and the reason Jesus answered the way he did is explained in Matthew (see commentary on Matt. 19:9).

We should immediately notice that Mark is giving us an abbreviated version of Jesus’ comments when we compare Jesus’ answer here and in Matthew 19:9. At least in Matthew 19 Jesus seems to allow for divorce in the case of sexual immorality, but he leaves that out here. This shows us that we are to understand Jesus’ answer in light of the full question and debate, not just grab onto Jesus’ short answer here in Mark and try to run our lives by it as if it were the whole truth of the situation.

Mark leaves out the part of the event that is the answer Jesus gives directly to the Pharisees, and moves forward to something Matthew does not cover: the disciples being in the house and asking Jesus again about the subject. The rabbinic debate and social context of the disciples’ question are well understood and defined by the beliefs and actions of the Pharisees, as well as by the record of the event in the Gospel of Matthew. That is why Mark only needs to record Jesus giving a very short, possibly abbreviated, answer to the disciples’ question.

The disciples knew that the Pharisees were not divorcing their wives because of sexual immorality. The Pharisees were champions of easy divorce and wanted Jesus’ opinion on it, which is why they asked him about divorce in the first place (Matt. 19:3; Mark 10:2). So Jesus was answering the disciples’ question in a well-known social situation: some of the Pharisees were divorcing their wives just to be with other women, and in the culture, although it was rare, some women were divorcing their husbands just to be with other men. Josephus records that Salome, wife of Costobarus, divorced him (Antiquities 15.7.10); and we know that Herodias divorced her husband Philip and married Herod Antipas ruler of Galilee. John the Baptist confronted Herod Antipas about his marriage to Herodias, which is why he ended up in jail and then executed (Mark 6:17-28).

We are now in a position to understand Jesus’ very short answer to his disciples about divorce and remarriage. In the context of people such as the Pharisees getting divorced simply because they liked someone else better than their spouse, the answer Jesus gave his disciples in Mark 10:11-12 is certainly correct. Divorcing someone for no other reason than you like someone better than your spouse is in effect the same as simply having an affair with that other person—you are committing adultery.

We should note that technically, Mark 10:11-12 are similar to Matthew 19:9 in that the phrase “commits adultery” is actually a passive verb in the Greek text. The verb is *moichaō* (#3429 μοιχάω, pronounced moy-'kah-ō), and it is in the passive voice. The passive verb is very important for the interpretation of the verse in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where the wife is clearly a victim (see commentary on Matt. 5:32), but not so important here or in Matthew 19:9, because in these verses the wicked husbands and wives are both the agent and the subject of the verb. They are the “victim” of their own action. Thus, while it is true that the husband or wife “is made to commit adultery,” he or she was made adulterous by their own action of divorcing and remarrying another person. Nevertheless, a technically correct translation of the phrases would be “is made adulterous,” instead of “commits adultery.” The person makes themselves adulterous by their own action.

Mar 10:12

**“commits adultery.”** See commentary on Mark 10:11. This verse about a woman divorcing her husband is only in Mark. Although it was difficult for a woman to divorce a husband in the ancient culture, it did occur. We know of some “high profile” cases, but that is understandable. Historians have always focused on the rich and famous, but that does not mean that other women of more ordinary status did not also sometimes divorce their husbands.

Mar 10:13

**“so that he could lay his hands on them.”** It was common in the culture that people would bring their children to the rabbis, and the rabbis would put their hands on the children and bless them. Note that in this case, Jesus was not asking to bless the children, this is what the parents wanted.

Mar 10:14

**“angry.”** The Greek word is *aganakteō* (#23 ἀγανακτέω), and it refers to being angry or displeased at a situation that is perceived to be unjust.

Mar 10:17

**“And as he was going out onto the road, a man ran up to him​.”** The record of the rich young ruler is in Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22, and Luke 18:18-23. It is Luke who tells us that the man was a ruler.

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[For more information, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Mar 10:18

**“No one is good except God alone.”** In Mark 10:17, a man ran up to Jesus and called him “good teacher,” and then asked him the most important question that any person could ever ask Jesus: “What must I do to inherit everlasting life?” The fact that the man asked that question to Jesus instead of asking it to his local synagogue leader, and the fact that the man began talking to Jesus by addressing him as “good teacher,” shows us that the man must have seen things in the life of Jesus that set him apart from the rest of the religious leaders and made Jesus seem “good” to him. Understanding those things sets the stage for us to be able to understand Jesus’ answer to the man.

Jesus was sinless (Heb. 4:15) and was good (cf. John 10:11, “the good shepherd”), but he was “good” in the eyes of this man because of what the man had heard him teach and seen him do (or the man had heard about those things from others). There is no evidence at this point that the man thought that Jesus was the Messiah. In that situation, it would have been very inappropriate for Jesus to overlook the question and thus imply that he was indeed “good” on his own. Jesus knew that a lot of what he was able to do to live the wise and sinless life that caught the man’s attention was due to God’s guidance and power in his life.

Without God’s help, Jesus would not have been the “good” person this man was believing him to be. Jesus had made that very plain in his teachings. For example, Jesus said, “the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing” (John 5:19). “I am not able to do anything on my own. As I hear, I judge” (John 5:30). “My teaching is not my own, but his that sent me” (John 7:16). “I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak” (John 8:28). “I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me, he has given me a command *as to* what to say…so whatever I say, I say just as the Father has said to me” (John 12:49-50).

Jesus did what he did and taught what he taught because of God’s guidance, and he gave God the credit. Thus, Jesus was like Joseph interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, who gave the credit to God (Gen. 41:16), and like Daniel who did not take the credit for interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream but gave the credit to God (Dan. 2:26-30). Jesus was not going to take the credit for being “good” in this man’s sight when in fact he knew that if he did not have guidance from God he would have almost certainly made a number of mistakes in what he said and did just like any other well-meaning person does. The only one who is truly “good” without the help of others is God, which explains Jesus’ statement: “No one is good except God alone.”

Mark 10:18 is one of the verses that shows us that Jesus was not God in the flesh, as the Trinitarians teach, because if he was God, then his answer that there is no one who is good except God makes no sense. Jesus’ answer would then be in essence, “Why do you call me good? There is no one good but God—and that’s me.” Furthermore, if Jesus was God in the flesh, but was trying to say that in his flesh body he was still not good, he would not have said there is no one good but “God,” he would have said there is no one good but “the Father.” Beyond that, if a person has to believe that Jesus is God to be saved, as many Trinitarians teach, then not only did Jesus miss a perfect opportunity to say that he was good and he was God, but his answer actually denied that he was God and would have prevented the man from believing in the Trinity. The biblical truth is that Jesus is the Son of God, not “God the Son.”

[For more on the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, see Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *One God & One Lord* (fourth edition); also [www.biblicalunitarian.com](http://www.biblicalunitarian.com).]

[For more on Jesus’ answer to the rich young ruler, see commentary on Matt. 19:16.]

Mar 10:19

**“do not defraud.”** This is not in the Hebrew Old Testament or in the Septuagint, but it is in Sirach, one of the books in the Apocrypha.

Mar 10:21

**“You lack one thing. Go, sell everything you have and give to poor *people*, and you will have treasure in heaven.”** Mark 10:21 (and Matt. 19:21) are a separate subject from the ruler’s question, which had been about what he had to do to have life in the age to come, i.e., everlasting life (Matt. 19:16; Mark 10:17). Jesus answered the ruler’s question about everlasting life by telling the man to keep the commandments. The young ruler said that he had kept the commandments since his youth, but did he still lack anything (Matt. 19:20). At that point, Jesus looked at him and loved him—Jesus loved his honesty and apparent hunger to obey God and attain the Kingdom—and Jesus said to him, “If you *really* want to reach the goal,” indicating that Jesus saw into the man’s heart and knew he wanted more than to “just be saved” (Matt. 19:21. The wording about the goal is only found in Matthew).

In replaying the conversation, a young ruler came to Jesus and asked him what to do to gain life in the Age to Come, i.e., everlasting life. Jesus answered the question with “obey the commandments.” That should have been the end of the conversation: question asked and answered. But the young ruler pressed further into the conversation and asked if he “missed out” on something; if he fell short or was lacking in some way (cf. BDAG; Thayer). Jesus loved the man and his attitude. The man must have felt that what he was doing was not enough, that he lacked something. We can surmise from the scope of Scripture that the young man needed a heart change. He had made the effort to keep the commandments, but internally he was still relying on an earthly safety net in this life, which was his money. Jesus told the man that if his goal was “treasure in heaven” (cf. Matt. 19:21), which is different than just “salvation,” he should sell his possessions and give to the poor and go with Jesus and follow him.

Matthew and Mark contain a subtle but very important lesson. Most people know in their heart if they are doing all they should be doing for the Lord, or if there is more they should be doing. Following the Lord does not mean giving your money or possessions away, because the Bible is full of wealthy people who were blessed by God and not only did not have to give their possessions away but generally became richer over time (e.g., Abraham, David, Solomon, Joseph of Arimathaea, Zacchaeus the tax collector, and the list could be multiplied greatly). Following the Lord means that we seek “first” the Kingdom of God, and if there is something that is holding us back from loving God and trusting Him with “all” our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then we let that thing go. The rich young ruler must have felt that there was more that he should be doing for the Lord and that he was trusting his wealth, but was saddened at what Jesus said. The Bible does say not to trust in wealth and that it will not help on Judgment Day (Ps. 49:6-14; 1 Tim. 6:17).

Mar 10:23

**“And looking around, he said to his disciples.”** Jesus looked around at his disciples, making eye contact with them before he spoke so that what he said would be deeply impressed upon them, then he spoke, looking at the rich man himself (Luke 18:24). Then the man walked away (Matt. 19:22; Mark 10:22).

**“will be.”** The future tense “will be” is supplied from the verb “to enter” which is a future tense (in Luke 18:24 the verb is present tense in the most reliable Greek manuscripts). A more literal rendering of the verb, and one that would maintain the future tense of “to enter,” would be to say, “How difficult it will be to enter the Kingdom of God for those who have wealth!” But this is more difficult in English.

Mar 10:24

**“continued *to teach.*”** The verb used is *apokritheis* (ἀποκριθεὶς #611) which typically means “to answer.” However, in certain instances, it can be used in the continuation of discourse.[[68]](#footnote-13158) For instance here, it is clear that nobody is asking him a question, yet Mark uses *apokrinomai*, therefore, he means to communicate that Jesus is continuing to teach, not answering a question.

**“Children, how hard it is to enter into the Kingdom of God.”** The manuscript evidence is that this is the reading of the original text. Through the centuries, scribes softened the text so Jesus’ words did not seem so harsh. One of the ways that textual scholars can tell if something has been added is that it is not added with the same wording. If scribes take out a word or phrase, what is left in the manuscripts is always the same. But if scribes don’t like the way a verse reads and add something to make it more acceptable, then what they add often differs in different manuscripts, and that is the case in Mark 10:24. Some later Greek texts add “for those who trust in riches,” some add “a rich man,” and one even adds “those who have possessions.”[[69]](#footnote-32377) Of course the context is referring to wealthy people, but that does not justify adding to the text to make that point clear.

Mar 10:25

**“camel.”** Here, “camel” is a hyperbole, an exaggeration to make a point. Jesus’ illustration is not extreme given the fact that Jesus, and Orientals from that era in general, were fond of hyperbole (cf. Luke 6:41, a person having a “beam” in his eye). As the “gnat” in Matthew 23:24 is a hyperbole, so also is the camel. For the idea of the needle’s eye being a gate, or the “camel” being a “rope,” see commentary on Luke 18:25.

Mar 10:26

**“to each other.”** There is manuscript evidence for “to him” and “to each other,” but most scholars believe the stronger evidence is for “to each other.” Also, it makes more sense that given the context the scribes would change “to each other” to “to him” because it seems that the disciples were in a discussion with Jesus, while there would be little reason to change “to him” to “to each other.” Thus the textual evidence and logical evidence supports “to each other” as being the original reading.

Mar 10:27

**“for people...for God...for God.”** The key to understanding this passage, and the parallel passage in Matthew 19:26, is the word “for,” which is the Greek preposition *para* (#3844 παρά). In this case, the preposition *para* is modifying “people” and “God.” The point that Jesus is making is that when it comes to getting saved, human effort alone will never get anyone saved. No amount of human effort will get a person saved and into the Kingdom of God. In this context, it fits better to say that it is impossible “for” people to be saved by their own efforts, whereas it does not fit as well to translate para as “with” because there is no evidence that it was in the minds of the disciples that they could be saved if they had someone “with” them helping them. The context was rich people getting into the Kingdom of Heaven and their unwillingness to do what it took to let go of their riches to do the will of God. Jesus is not saying that a rich person cannot be saved, but the fact is that most rich people value their money more than God; the attitude one has toward money and material possessions is a heart issue—the heart has to be right with God. It seems the rich young ruler did not have the right attitude about his wealth.

For God “all things are possible,” so God can save people even though they cannot save themselves. Peter responded to Jesus’ statement by pointing out that he and the others have certainly looked to God for salvation because he said, “We have left everything and followed you.”

This verse shows that salvation is indeed a team effort between God and the sinner. It is not, like some theologians teach, that God saves who He wants and rejects who He wants, or that salvation is totally accomplished by God apart from human will. We know that God wants all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and if He could save people without them wanting or asking for salvation, then everyone would be. The reason God wants everyone to be saved but not everyone will be, is that salvation is a team effort—the person must want it and do what it takes to receive it before God can save the person, and not everyone does what is necessary to be saved.

Mar 10:28

**“Look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention (see commentary on Matt. 1:20). Here it is not spoken with great force, but to remind Jesus of the sacrifices the apostles had made. In this context, the meaning is close to “Look at what we have done. We have left everything and followed you.”

Mar 10:29

**“because of me.”** For an explanation of this phrase, see commentary on Matthew 5:11.

Mar 10:30

**“everlasting life.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

Mar 10:32

**“And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem.”** This record of Jesus telling the twelve apostles that he would be arrested and killed is in Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, and Luke 18:31-34. At this time Jesus would have taken what is now the old Roman road that goes uphill from Jericho (c. 800 feet below sea level) to Jerusalem (c. 2600 feet above sea level). The distance between Jerusalem and Old Testament Jericho is about 18 miles.

**“amazed...afraid.”** The amazement and even fear that the disciples were experiencing is natural. For some time now, the Jews in Jerusalem had been trying to arrest and kill Jesus. At the Feast of Dedication (in our December), the Jews were trying to arrest him (John 10:39). Then, when Jesus went back to the Jerusalem area to raise Lazarus from the dead, the Jews made plans to kill him (John 11:53). After that, Jesus made one last itinerary.

Mar 10:33

**“Pay attention!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Mar 10:35

**“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him.”** This record is also in Matthew 20:20-28. Actually, it was the mother of James and John who brought her sons to Jesus (Matt. 20:20), but James and John were willing participants and the blessing was for them so that detail is left out of the record in Mark. In fact, it is possible that James and John asked their mother to ask Jesus because it was common in the culture to have someone else ask for a favor for you rather than ask for it yourself.

Mar 10:41

**“angry.”** The Greek word is *aganakteō* (#23 ἀγανακτέω), and it refers to being angry or displeased at a situation that is perceived to be unjust.

Mar 10:45

**“life.”** See commentary on Matthew 20:28, which is a similar verse.

**“ransom.”** The Greek word is *lutron* (#3083 λύτρον, pronounced 'loo-tron). In Greek literature, the *lutron*, “ransom” was the price paid for the release of a slave or prisoner of war. Jesus Christ paid the ransom price for us with his blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

There have been huge debates in Christendom about to whom the ransom is paid. Before summarizing some basics, it is important that we realize that the Bible never says to whom the “ransom” is paid. This should speak volumes to us. God certainly could have told us. The word ransom is specifically used in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, and the closely related word *antilutron*, also translated “ransom,” is used in 1 Timothy 2:6. The New Testament tells us that we, by our sin, earned “death.” “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Then to magnify the work of Christ, we are told that Christ paid the price that we owed and died on our behalf (cf. Rom. 5:6, 8; Heb. 2:9). The sinner is “ransomed,” “redeemed,” “bought with a price” “declared righteous,” etc.

God could have told us “to whom” the ransom or price of redemption was paid. He did not clearly say it. This should tell us that we should not put our emphasis there. We can talk about it, surely, but the obvious emphasis in the Word is that redemption is done. It is accomplished. To go beyond “It is finished” is to drift from the realm of certainty, to some degree anyway, into the realm of speculation. That can be seen at once simply by studying the “theories of atonement.” Dozens of books have been written on the subject specifically because there are unclear issues involved. What is clear is that we are ransomed, we are redeemed, the price has been paid on our behalf, and when we have trust (“faith”) in Christ we are saved and promised everlasting life.

That having been said, it may help to briefly cover a few points. One is that many unbelievers reject the theory of atonement altogether and say that it, in and of itself, disproves Christianity. They say that no matter to whom the ransom is paid, how can one man righteously die for another? We answer that by saying that unbelievers did not create the universe nor the rules by which God governs it or the people who live in it. It is clear from the sacrifices in the Old Testament that God righteously accepts substitutionary sacrifice, and if He does, He does.

The Church Father Origen said that the ransom paid by the death of Jesus was paid to Satan, and many people still believe that. However, it seems clear that both righteousness (holiness), and the penalty for acting and becoming unholy and unrighteous were established by God. Satan has power today only by virtue of the fact that he is a liar and murderer. He lied his way into getting his power, and will end up destroyed in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). Satan was not owed any ransom just because he tricked mankind into sin; mankind did not break any of his laws; and Satan cannot, in fact, would not, accept the blood of Christ as a ransom. He cannot because he does not have the power to release mankind from the penalty of sin; he did not give the laws or set the penalty in the first place. Furthermore, if a person is jailed in lieu of payment of a fine, would he pay it to the jailer? No, he would pay it to the court, the system that put the law in place. Lastly, Satan would not accept the ransom of Christ because it is against his purposes: he does not desire mankind to be saved; he desires the destruction of all mankind.

That having been said, two more theories of atonement should be mentioned. The first is that the ransom or redemption price is paid to God. That theory, in and of itself, has so many variations that books have been written on that alone. The basics of the theory that the payment is made to God as expounded by Anselm, Bishop of Canterbury (1033-1109) is that because God is righteous He must respond with anger and punishment when His laws are broken, thus the payment of breaking those laws is made to Him. Adding to the logic of this theory is that under the Law of Moses, the sacrifices for sin were offered to Yahweh (cf. Exod. 12:48; Lev. 4:3, 4, 14, 15, 24; 5:6, 7, 15; 22:24; 23:12; etc.), and the Passover, and sacrifices, were shadows of Christ. In contrast, sacrifices to the Devil or demons were strictly forbidden. It foreshadowed nothing (cf. Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20). It is this theory of atonement that has dominated the orthodox Church for some 1,000 years.

Another theory of atonement is that the payment was not actually made to anyone. God set up the laws, and His justice required death for sin. When Christ died, that fulfilled the law, it did not actually “pay” anyone. In that sense, the word “ransom” is understood figuratively, as if “Justice” was personified. We can best understand this in terms of someone paying for his crime by being imprisoned. If a person is in prison for a year and “pays his debt to society,” who gets paid? Not society, they do not receive a dime. Not the jailor (Satan), not the Judge (God). The debt is “paid” in a figurative sense simply by fulfilling the law. The strongest evidence for this argument is that of all the scriptures that refer to the death of Christ, atonement, ransom, redemption, substitution, being “bought with a price,” etc., not once is anyone said to be paid. Not God, and certainly not the Devil. The simple biblical truth would be that Jesus paid the legal price required by mankind’s sin, which was death, and thus fulfilled the legal requirement that the wages of sin is death.

Mar 10:46

**“as he went out from Jericho.”** This record occurs in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43. The timing of the event in Matthew and Mark seems to contradict Luke 18:35-39, but they actually do not (see commentary on Luke 18:35).

Mar 10:47

**“Son of David.”** A messianic title. It is not known how this man came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but he did. God reveals the truth to people who are humble and hungry for truth.

[For more on “Son of David,” see commentary on Matt. 1:1.]

Mar 10:49

**“Be encouraged.”** Many translations have the phrase “Take courage,” and in this context, to “take courage” and “be encouraged” essentially mean the same thing. The lexical definition of the Greek is to “be firm or resolute in the face of danger or adverse circumstances.”[[70]](#footnote-17829) Here, we see that the blind man was already courageous because he repeatedly called out to Jesus after the crowd told him to be silent. So, the meaning of the text is more like, “be encouraged because he is listening to you and calling for you.”

Mar 10:50

**“tossing aside his outer garment.”** This is an indication of how badly Bartimaeus wanted to be healed. The heavy outer garment was essential to stay warm and protected from the weather. It was so important to a poor person that if he needed to borrow money and gave his garment as collateral, even if he could not repay the debt, the garment had to be returned to him by nightfall, so he could use it (Deut. 24:13). But the garment was heavy and long, and if someone wanted to move quickly it could get in the way. Bartimaeus did not want anything to get in the way of his healing, and he did not want to be so slow that Jesus moved on before he could be healed. So he risked losing his valuable garment so he could get his healing, which was of much greater value to him.

**“jumped to his feet.”** The Greek is more literally, “jumped up,” but it is understood in the context that he jumped to his feet (cf. NIV).

Mar 10:51

**“I want to regain my sight!”** The blind men (see Matt. 20:30; there were two men) had not been born blind, they lost their vision at some point in their lives. There was a large amount of eye disease in the ancient world, often due to the fact that it was hard to keep insects out of one’s eyes. Today we have screens on our windows, but in the ancient world people’s faces were always under attack by insects and many people became blind because of it. The man in John 9 was the only person Jesus healed who was born blind (John 9:32). So Blind Bartimaeus lost his sight sometime during his life.

**Mark Chapter 11**

Mar 11:2

**“in front of.”** Jesus was traveling from Jericho on what is known as “the Jericho Road,” the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. It is only about a 15-mile journey, and thus a person can walk it in one long day, however, it is a steep climb. Jericho is more than 800 feet below sea level, and the Mount of Olives, which Jesus had to climb and from which he would get the view of Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-41) is over 2,500 feet high, making the ascent well over 3,000 feet. Jesus would reach Bethphage and Bethany before he reached the summit of the Mount of Olives.

**“colt.”** This “colt” is not a young horse, but a young donkey (Matt. 21:2-5; cf. Zech. 9:9).

Mar 11:3

**“‘The Lord has need of it and will immediately send it back here again.’”** There is a debate about where Jesus’ words end. However, there is good evidence that the whole statement is the words of Jesus, and also this fits with his honest character that he would make sure that the animals got back to their owner. The Greek word *palin*, “again,” juxtaposed with “here,” making the phrase “here again,” is very good evidence that the whole statement is the words of Jesus; he was making sure the owner knew that the animals would be quickly returned. Jesus used the donkey immediately and went into Jerusalem on it (Mark 11:3-11). Although the Bible never specifically says Jesus returned the donkey, we can be sure he did, likely sending a disciple to take it back when he was in the Temple (Mark 11:11).

Mar 11:4

**“a door.”** The Greek texts are divided between “the door” and “a door.” Since Jesus did not designate any particular house, “a door” seems more accurate.

Mar 11:9

**“Hosanna.”** The people who were shouting praises to Jesus as he entered Jerusalem were for the most part not the same group as the group that shouted, “Crucify him” only a few days later. See commentary on Luke 23:21 and commentary on Luke 23:27.

Mar 11:11

**“he went out to Bethany.”** Jerusalem was a walled city, and so Jesus “went out” of it and traveled east over the Mount of Olives to Bethany, which was on the east side of the mountain.

Mar 11:13

**“seeing a fig tree.”** The fig tree was one of the trees in the Bible that symbolized Israel. This particular fig tree was a fitting parable of Israel. It was in full leaf and looked very promising, even ahead of the rest of the trees. It should have been a source of great blessing for those who looked for early sustenance coming out of the winter months. Instead, it was a liar, promising much but delivering little, deceiving weary travelers and giving them false hope. Jesus cursed it, foreshadowing the curse and destruction that would come upon Israel.

**“it was not the season for figs.”** The question this verse poses to the average reader is, “Why would Jesus curse the fig tree for not having figs if it was not the season for figs?” The answer to that question lies in understanding that, although there were a couple varieties of fig trees in Israel, the common variety produces two crops of figs per year. An early fig grows on the old branch stock that grew the preceding year. This early fig often begins to grow even before there are leaves on the fig tree, although sometimes these early figs and the leaves start to grow at the same time. These early figs usually start developing in March, but may be a little earlier or later depending on the climate, and the circumstances of any given tree (Israel has many different climates, usually somewhat depending on elevation). These early figs mature in June, and the leaves grow and mature along with them. A second crop of figs starts on the new tree growth that sprouts that year, and they generally ripen in August.

Since Mark is recording events around Passover, Jesus would have approached the fig tree in April. Although it was not yet the season for figs, Jesus noticed that this particular tree was in full leaf. If the leaves were fully formed, that meant he could expect the figs of this particular tree to be early too, or at least be far enough along to be somewhat satisfying to eat. This should not surprise us. It often happens in horticulture that a plant is a few weeks earlier than the “regular season.” However, when Jesus got to the tree, the situation was not just that the figs it had were not yet ripe, it did not have any figs at all!

The Greek text starts the last phrase, “it was not the season for figs,” with the Greek word *gar* (#1063 γάρ), and is usually translated “for” or occasionally “because,” and it usually gives the reason for something. However, that use of *gar* does not fit this verse. Jesus did not find only leaves on the fig tree “because” it was not the season for figs. This phrase is letting us know that, indeed, it was not the general season for figs. But if that was the case, why would Jesus expect figs in the first place? The answer is that this particular tree had leaves, so Jesus could expect to find them on this tree. This use of the *gar* is what some scholars refer to as the “confirmatory gar” and confirms and clarifies what has already been stated. See commentary on Romans 9:3.

Jesus then cursed this tree and it died overnight. Jesus would ordinarily never curse a tree of any kind for not having fruit or buds. Often trees go through hardships that keep them from bearing fruit in a given year. Jesus said he did what he heard from his Father, God, and this is an example of that. God gave Jesus the revelation to curse the tree so Jesus cursed it and it died overnight, which was a miracle. Thus this tree became a twofold teaching example: it showed that Israel was going to be cursed (which it was for rejecting its Messiah), and it also taught the apostles that when God gave you revelation, no matter how unlikely it seemed, if you trust God and believe and act on what He says, the revelation will come to pass (this is the manifestation of trust, 1 Cor. 12:9).

Mar 11:14

**“he answered and said.”** The original text has the phrase, “answered and said” more than 100 times in the Bible, and it can sometimes be confusing because it is often used when no one asked a question. The phrase is an idiom, but it has a literal overtone behind it. The person who “answered and said” may not have been answering a direct question from someone, but they were answering and addressing the situation that was presenting itself before them (see commentary on Matt. 11:25).

**“will ever eat.”** The Greek word translated “eat” is *phagō* (#5315 φάγω, φάγομαι), in the optative mood, but as Lenski points out in his commentary, here the optative is equivalent to the imperative mood, a command.[[71]](#footnote-18008) Jesus is not saying, “May no one eat,” as if he were making a request, but rather, “No one will eat!” He is commanding something to happen. He is cursing the fig tree. A. Nyland gets the sense correctly: “No one will ever eat fruit from you again!”[[72]](#footnote-11061)

[For “curse,” see Mark 11:21 and see commentary on Luke 6:28.]

Mar 11:15

**“came into Jerusalem.”** The exact meaning of “came into” (*erchomai eis*) must be determined from the context because it is used for “come to,” “come into,” “arrive at,” etc. In this case, Jerusalem was a walled city, so they literally “came into” it. They did not just “come to” it. Although the eastern wall of the Temple was part of the outer wall of Jerusalem, the main entrances to the Temple were from inside Jerusalem, especially from the south (which had both a double and triple entry gate) and from the west.

**“doves.”** The people who were poor and could not afford to bring or buy a lamb or goat were allowed to sacrifice doves, which were much less expensive (Lev. 12:8). Before the Magi came and gave gifts to Joseph and Mary, they were poor and had to sacrifice doves (Luke 2:24).

Mar 11:18

**“and began looking for a way to destroy him.”** After Jesus quoted the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 7:11) concerning the religious leaders in Jerusalem, they desired to kill Jesus and get rid of him because he was disrupting the usual business in the temple.

**“they were afraid of him, for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching.”** The religious leaders were afraid of Jesus because they thought he would win over the crowd to his teaching and they would lose control of the people, their esteemed position in the eyes of the people, and almost certainly the flow of money coming to them.

Mar 11:19

**“And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.”** This is a summary statement. Jesus and his apostles stayed in Bethany during the time before his arrest and crucifixion, and they would go into the city of Jerusalem during the day but then go back to Bethany at night.

Mar 11:20

**“the fig tree had withered away from the roots *up*.”** The fig tree was a symbol of Israel. The Old Testament sometimes portrays the people of Israel as figs (Jer. 24:1-8; Hos. 9:10). In the case of Jesus cursing the fig tree, it was a fitting parable for Israel and what would happen to Israel. Like this fig tree that Jesus cursed, Israel looked promising; it looked like it was flourishing and blessed by God, but when one looked deeper there was no godly fruit that Israel was producing.

The Bible does not tell us much about the fig tree Jesus cursed. Knowing the godly character of Jesus, we can safely assume that the fig tree was in a public place and was not personally owned by anyone. Jesus is never recorded as having destroyed anyone’s private property. The Bible does let us know that the death of this fig tree was a miracle. It was a miracle because it died in one day. But it was also a miracle because it died from the roots up. Under normal circumstances, the death of a tree is always noticed in the leaves first, then in the branches, and lastly in the roots. But this tree died from the roots up. This is a fitting metaphor for Israel itself. The “roots” of Israel were rotten and spiritually dead. The leaders were children of the Devil (John 8:44), and the so-called godly regulations that they promulgated were actually a rejection of the Mosaic law (Mark 7:5-13) and were a burden to the people (Matt. 23:4). The ungodliness of the leaders, the “roots” of the society eventually led to the death of the tree itself and the eventual destruction of Israel by the Romans.

God gave revelation to Jesus to curse the tree and he did, trusting what God said, which is why it died overnight. So the tree was a symbol of Israel and the cursing of it was also an example to the apostles of the manifestation of trust (see commentary on Mark 11:13).

Mar 11:22

**“trust.”** The Greek noun *pistis* (#4102 πίστις) means “trust” in this context. Most English versions translate it as “faith,” but “faith” is so greatly misunderstood that “trust” is the better translation in modern English.

[For more information on *pistis* and translating it as “trust,” see Appendix 2: “‘Faith’ is ‘Trust.’”]

Mar 11:23

**“lifted up.”** The Greek is *airō* (#142 αἴρω, pronounced eye-rō), and it is passive voice, imperative mood. Although it would be very literal to say, “Be taken up,” the imperative mood combined with the context, moving a mountain at your command, gives the sense that the mountain is being snatched up out of its place and thrown into the ocean.[[73]](#footnote-11935)

**“sea.”** In this context, Jesus is teaching in Jerusalem, and the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea were the closest and best-known bodies of water.

**“does not doubt.”** The Greek is *diakrinō* (#1252 διακρίνω). In the middle voice, as it is here, it refers to being undecided within oneself. It is the indecision that causes one to hesitate or waver. Nyland makes the case that “doubt” is not a good translation here, saying *apisteō* or *aporeō* would be “doubt,” and “undecided” would be better.[[74]](#footnote-27494) While it is true that we often use “doubt” in the sense of a specific and steady state of mind, such as when we “doubt” that what someone says is true only because we cannot “prove” them to be lying,” it is also true that we use “doubt” of the times we doubt ourselves and waver between doubt and trust. Also, “undecided” might seem to say we are undecided about obeying God, which is not what the verse is saying.

This verse makes a strong point about the manifestation of trust (which is the full context here. It takes revelation from God, and then the manifestation of trust to kill a fig tree overnight or move a mountain; see commentary on Mark 11:13). When God gives us revelation that something can be done at our command, of course it will not happen if we doubt we can do it. But even if we are “undecided” and waver between trust (faith) and unbelief, we will not be able to carry out the will of God. Like Abraham, we must be strong in our faith, our trust in God.

[For more on the manifestations of holy spirit, and the manifestation of trust, see commentary on 1 Cor. 12:9.]

**“it will be *done* for him.”** The Greek is more literally, “it will be for him.” It is important to get the sense of what the text is saying. It is not saying, “he will do it himself,” it is saying it will be done for him, but who will do it? The context is that God will do it, thus the need to trust God (Mark 11:22). Since God will do it, the translation, “it will be done for him” properly catches the sense of the text.

Mar 11:24

**“believe that you have received them, and they will be *done* for you.”** This verse contains great truth, and great potential to be misunderstood and wrongly applied. Certain faith teachers have taken it to mean that through faith, we instantly receive what we ask for, and even though it may clearly seem to not be the case, we must nevertheless believe that we have already received what has been asked for. Often, this can lead to unhealthy situations where Christians must pretend that circumstances are not as they are, or feel that they are not having “faith.”

This comes from a misguided understanding of the verse. The second half of the verse should settle any thought as to whether the requests have been received—it assumes they have not. This is why it says, “and they **will** be (future tense) *done* for you.” An understanding of the Greek behind this phrase will further clear things up. To properly understand this verse we must understand the tense of the verb translated “you have received.” It is *not* the present tense, as the KJV can give the impression with their rendering, “believe that ye receive *them*.” Rather, the verb is in the aorist (past) tense. So understood literally, the verse would not be asking us to believe we have presently received anything, but to believe that we have *already in the past* received what we are presently praying for; then, perplexingly, it ends with the promise that if we so believe, we will in the future receive what we believe has already been received before we even asked for it.

How are we to understand this? Why would God put the verb in the aorist tense? The reason is this verse contains an idiom known as the proleptic aorist (under the category of the idiom of the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6). The proleptic aorist is a form of the figure of speech heterosis, where one tense is used instead of another for emphasis. In this case, the aorist tense is used for the future tense, speaking as though a yet-future event had already come to pass. Wallace explains the proleptic aorist as follows: “An author sometimes uses the aorist for the future to stress the certainty of the event. It involves a ‘rhetorical transfer’ of a future event as though it were past.”[[75]](#footnote-31283) Here in Mark 11:24 the event of receiving what is prayed for is yet future, but it is put in the past tense (“have received”) to emphasize its certainty.

When we understand that this phrase is the idiom of the proleptic aorist, we see that God is not asking us to believe we have already in the past received something we do not really yet have, nor is he asking us to believe we have presently received something we have not yet received; rather, he is asking us to believe we *will* receive our requests in the future. This saves us from the harm of turning biblical belief into make-believe.

When Jesus cursed the fig tree he was acting by revelation and operating the “manifestation of trust” (1 Cor. 12:9). No one can “just trust” and kill a fig tree or move a mountain by their own power; it is God who has the power to do that. But if God gives you revelation to do an “impossible thing,” like kill a tree, move a mountain, split an ocean like Moses did, knock down solid rock walls like Joshua did, or raise the dead like some of the prophets, Jesus, and Peter did, if you trust God and do not doubt in your heart that the impossible thing will be done, it will indeed be done.

[For more on Jesus cursing the fig tree, see commentary on Mark 11:13. For more on the manifestation of trust, see commentary on 1 Cor. 12:9. For more on what “faith” truly is, and that it is “trust” and not a “power of the mind that makes impossible things happen,” see Appendix 2: “‘Faith’ is ‘Trust.’”]

Mar 11:25

**“stand praying.”** The indicative mood of the Greek verb “stand” (*stēkō* #4739 στήκω) indicates that Jesus is thinking of this as something the disciples do; it is not just a hypothetical. Standing up to pray was an ancient practice, and reflected the belief that our Creator deserved the honor of standing before Him when making supplications and requests.

Mar 11:26

We omit this verse as do most modern versions as being an addition to the text. The verse was apparently added in order to harmonize Matthew 6:15 with the Gospel of Mark. Metzger writes, “Although it might be thought that the sentence was accidentally omitted because of homoeoteleuton, its absence from early witnesses that represent all text-types makes it highly probable that the words were inserted by copyists in imitation of Mt. 6:15.”[[76]](#footnote-19474)

Mar 11:27

**“came again into Jerusalem.”** Jerusalem was a walled city, so they literally “came into” it. They did not just “come to” it. See commentary on Mark 11:15.

Mar 11:28

**“Who gave you the authority.”** The Greek text is more literally “this” authority. This second question is a restatement of the first in order to make the question clear: where did Jesus get the authority to say and do the things that he was doing. The Greek text has an “or,” which is easier to understand than it is in English, which is why many modern English versions omit the “or” entirely (cf. CEB, CEV, CSB, NLT, NRSV).

Mar 11:32

**“Of human *origin*….”** Mark 11:32 contains a good example of the common figure of speech anacoluthon, in which the speaker abruptly stops speaking about one subject and either stops completely or continues with another line of thought. The religious leaders were questioning Christ. He asked them a counter-question, which put them in a bind. As they considered their options as to how to answer Christ’s question, it was clear that if they said that John’s baptism only had human authority they could be in serious trouble with the people. In the intensity of the moment and with the uncertainty of how to move forward, the Jews simply stopped in mid-sentence.

[For a more complete explanation of anacoluthon with examples, see commentary on 1 Cor. 9:15.]

[See Word Study: “Anacoluthon.”]

Mar 11:33

**“Then I will not tell you.”** Jesus was not fooled by the Jews saying they did not know. They knew exactly what they believed, but those hypocrites and cowards were afraid to say it. Jesus had said if they would tell him about John’s baptism, he would tell them about the source of his authority. Since they would not tell him, he kept his word and would not tell them.

**Mark Chapter 12**

Mar 12:1

**“And he began to speak to them in parables.”** This parable of the Greedy Farmers is in Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12, and Luke 20:9-19.

This parable is a clear reference to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, except in Isaiah the vineyard is itself Israel, and is wicked, while in Jesus’ parable the vineyard is God’s and it is the people who are hired to tend it who are evil. Jesus was using thinly veiled language to speak of the leaders of the Jews, who had been entrusted by God to take care of His vineyard, i.e., His people, but were evil. The Jews got his point (Mark 12:12), and wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the people. This shows the boldness and honesty of Jesus. He did not just ignore the evil of the Jews, but informed them and any disciple that was paying attention. This parable appears in Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12, and Luke 20:9-19.

**“A man planted a vineyard.”** In parables such as this, the “man” is God.​

**“and put a wall around it.”** Farmers would surround their plots and vineyards with a short stone wall. Stones were abundant in Israel whereas wood and fence material was scarce and expensive to work into a proper fence. So culturally the man would have built a low stone wall around his vineyard (cf. Prov. 24:30-31).

Mar 12:2

**“of the fruit.”** This is an example of a partitive genitive. The custom was that the owner would get a specific portion of the yield of the crops.

Mar 12:7

**“and the inheritance will be ours.”** This is incredibly myopic and arrogant. The farmers are blinded by greed. Why would they think that they would get the land if they killed the landowner’s son? But this is a parable, and the worldly and satanic people think they can actually overthrow the reign of God and get rid of Him.

Mar 12:10

“**the cornerstone.** The Greek text reads, “the head of the corner.” That is, the stone with the most important place (see “cornerstone” in commentary on Matt. 21:42).

Mar 12:12

**“because they knew that he spoke the parable against them.”** Matthew is clearer, and says that when “the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them” (Matt. 21:45).

Mar 12:13

**“to trap him in his words.”** The record of the trap about paying taxes is recorded in Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17, and Luke 20:20-25.

Mar 12:14

**“census tax.”** The Greek word is *kēnsos* (#2778 κῆνσος, pronounced 'kane-sos). In the New Testament, a census tax or “poll tax” referred to the tax or tribute levied on individuals, and it was to be paid yearly. It is not an income tax, a property tax, or a toll. Since it is a tax on every adult we would call it a poll tax or capitation tax. The Jews especially hated this tax, because it was seen as a specific sign of servitude to Rome, and therefore the Rabbis had many disputes among themselves and with others about paying it.

This was a well-thought-through trap. It is recorded in three of the four Gospels: Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; and Luke 20:20-26. This event occurred in the last week of Jesus’ life, and especially in those latter days of Jesus’ life the authorities were actively seeking a way to discredit and arrest him, and the subject of taxes could provide a way for them to trap him.

Paying taxes was always a “hot topic,” and most people hated to pay them. To heighten the tension of the situation (and thus the chance of Jesus making a misstatement and being trapped), the Pharisees, who took issue with Rome on many issues, brought with them the Herodians, who were Jews who supported Rome and supported paying taxes to Rome (cf. Matt. 22:16; Mark 12:13). There was a natural animosity between these two groups, but it also seemed natural that they would ask Jesus, a teacher from Galilee with no party affiliation, about taxes, something that no doubt the Pharisees and Herodians argued about regularly. Thus, although the Jews were trying to trap Jesus by asking him the question, people in the crowd would not have thought it out of character for them to ask Jesus about paying the poll tax.

They began the trap by flattering Jesus and telling him how they knew he only cared about teaching the true way of God (Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21). This was more than just flattery. It was designed to make sure that Jesus would not simply dodge the issue and refuse to answer the question. If he did not care about what people thought, and taught the way of God, he would answer clearly and directly—something basically guaranteed to get him in trouble either way he answered. If he answered it was lawful to pay, the people would have doubted his being a teacher from God. If he answered it was not lawful to pay, he would have been in trouble with the Roman authorities.

The Pharisees then asked Jesus if it was “lawful” to pay taxes to Caesar. The main idea behind the word “lawful” seems to be whether paying the tax, and thus acknowledging Rome’s authority over people individually, broached God’s role as the sole true authority over the people. Jesus’ answer was godly and wise: the money belonged to Caesar, so give back to Caesar what was his. This answer, of course, amounts to paying the tax, but with a different emphasis. It is not that in paying the tax Jesus recognized the authority of Caesar over him, it was simply that the money was not his to begin with. It belonged to Caesar. Jesus demonstrated over and over in his ministry that if people would trust God, then God would take care of them. It was okay with God if people used money borrowed from Caesar to help make life easier, but God also could take care of people without borrowed money, something He did regularly, for example in multiplying food for hungry people.

There is quite a bit on paying taxes in the Bible, and Jesus addressed it on a couple different occasions. For example, besides this poll tax, he spoke of the half-shekel Temple tax in Matthew 17:25-27. Never did Jesus support not paying taxes for the reason most people do not like to pay taxes—that the government wastes the money or spends it unwisely. The fact is that in biblical times the government was not answerable to the people. There were no elections, and certainly no promises of being “fair,” being “transparent” with the tax money, or using it for the good of the people and the education of children. The ruler used it any way he wanted, and that was the way it had always been. In biblical times people had no recourse from unfair taxes, they paid them or suffered. They could be sent to jail or sometimes be sold into slavery. Today taxes are as hated as they have ever been, but in many countries, such as the USA or Great Britain, the people have the right to vote for representatives who will recognize their right to keep that which they have worked for. Sadly, the number of people who want a free ride on the backs of others keeps growing, so it is harder and harder to get a majority to vote to allow a person to keep the money he works for. The standard communist idea, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” is more and more the global standard, which means that those people who work hard and should have more just have more taken away from them by those in power.

Despite that, God’s way is not lying and cheating on taxes, but realizing that mankind does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; and storing up treasure in heaven by living a holy lifestyle. Certainly, there have been times in history when people revolted against their government and overthrew it, but that is totally different from an individual simply not paying taxes because he thinks they are unfair. Christians need to realize that this world will never be fair, just, or right, and the joy of life is in fellowship with God and Christ, and with like-minded believers.

Mar 12:18

**“who say that there is no resurrection.”** The Old Testament has a number of verses about God raising the dead in the future (cf. Deut. 32:39; Job. 19:25-27; Ps. 71:20; Isa. 26:19; 66:14; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2, 13; and Hos. 13:14).

[For more about the Sadducees and the resurrection, see commentary on Matt. 22:23.]

Mar 12:24

**“Isn’t this.”** This is the figure of speech erotesis (rhetorical question). The Sadducees did not know either the Scriptures or the power of God on the subject of the resurrection.

Mar 12:25

**“from among the dead.”** See commentary on Romans 4:24.[[77]](#footnote-30911)

**“neither marry nor are given in marriage.”** In the next life, people do not marry. See commentary on Matthew 22:30.

Mar 12:27

**“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”** For an explanation of this, see commentary on Matthew 22:32.

Mar 12:28

**“disputing with one another.”** The Greek verb translated “disputing” has a wide lexical range and can be translated disputing, debating, arguing, or even discussing, but here it seems the conversation was somewhat intense.

**“Jesus.”** The Greek text is literally, “he,” but the REV and other versions change it to “Jesus” for clarity (cf. CSB, NIV, AMP, The Kingdom NT by N.T. Wright, God’s New Covenant by H. Cassirer, The NT by Charles Williams).

**“What.”** The Pharisee asks this question in a respectful manner, and it was an honest question, and designed to “test” Jesus. Jesus had just silenced the Sadducees on the topic of resurrection, which delighted the Pharisees. The Sadducees and Pharisees also were sharply divided over which commandments were important and which were not. The Sadducees asserted that a commandment had to be in the Torah, the first five books of Moses, while the Pharisees had a much broader interpretation. This Pharisee wanted to see how Jesus would answer, and whether it would support a Pharisaical position or not.

**“most important.”** The Greek word translated “most important” is *prōtos* (#4413 πρῶτος), and it can mean first in time, first in place, first in rank, honor or power. Here it means first, or most important, in rank. We would normally say, “most important” for clarity and to avoid any question about what commandment was given first by God. We would say, “What is the most important commandment in the Law?” The answer is important, because it turns out that the most important commandment was not even one of the Ten Commandments, although it is certainly implied because if we have no other gods before God, and if we obey the Ten Commandments, then we clearly love God. Nevertheless, the statement that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, was an amplification and a clarification of the rest of the Law.

Mar 12:29

**“most important.”** See commentary on Mark 12:28.

**“Hear, O Israel!”** The verb “hear” means not only to hear, but to pay attention and heed. Thus, some versions have, “Listen.” The verb “hear” is in the imperative mood, hence the exclamation point at the end of the phrase.

**“Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone.”** This verse is a quotation of Deuteronomy 6:4, and is most often translated something like this: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,” or “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” However, in this article, we will see that these translations are not the best and can lead to false conclusions.

The Hebrew words *Shema Yisrael* (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל), “Hear, [O] Israel!”) are the first two words of Deuteronomy 6:4, and are the title of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services (the title “Shema Yisrael” is often shortened to simply “Shema”). Observant Jews consider the Shema to be the most important part of the prayer service in Judaism. Originally the “Shema” prayer was only Deuteronomy 6:4, but in more modern Judaism it has been expanded to include other sections of the Torah as well. (In this article, we will sometimes refer to Deuteronomy 6:4 as the Shema).

The first thing we should say about the statement, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!” is that, according to Christ, it was a part of the greatest commandment in the Law. Usually when someone asks, “What are the two greatest commandments in the Law?” the answer is “Love God, and love your neighbor.” But Jesus did not answer that way. Jesus included the Shema in his answer, and by doing so made a very important point: before we say that “Love God” is the first and greatest commandment, we should know who “God” is. The Shema shows us that we do not get to choose who “our God” is, Yahweh alone is God.

Most people think that the great commandment is just “Love God,” partly because the record in Matthew 22:37, which is the same event, does not include the Shema statement. However, it is common that when two or more Gospels record an event, they include different details. In this case, Mark gives the full account, and Matthew leaves out the Shema. That is understandable for a couple different reasons. One is that the account in Matthew is much shorter than the account in Mark, but a more important reason is that the Gospel of Mark highlights Jesus’ ministry as the servant of God. One of the important roles of a servant was to promote and protect the Master, and so it makes sense that in his role as the “servant of God,” Jesus would promote that his Father, God, was the only God.

[For more on why there are four Gospels and the emphasis of each Gospel, see commentary on Mark 1:1, “the Good News of Jesus Christ.”]

The Shema is widely understood by Christians to be about the nature of God and a confirmation of the Trinity and the compound unity of God, i.e., that God is “one,” and therefore He is one God made up of three persons. However, that is not at all what the verse is saying, as we will see by examining both the Old Testament and New Testament texts on the subject.

One thing should be clear to everyone who studies Mark 12:29: no matter how the Greek text of Mark is worded, it is a translation of the Hebrew, because to answer the Pharisee’s question, Jesus Christ would have quoted the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Jesus would not have spoken Greek to him. Although we will see as the study develops that the Greek in Mark (and the Septuagint), can mean what the Hebrew OT says, the Hebrew wording is very dense and has a number of secondary meanings built into it, and so the full meaning of the Hebrew is difficult to capture in Greek.

To fully understand the dialogue between the Pharisee and Jesus in Mark 12:28-34, it is helpful to know it is the same record as Matthew 22:34-39, although each Gospel has details that the other Gospel does not include. The Pharisee, who was also a “scribe,” that is, an expert in the Law, asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment in the Law. The conversation that followed gives us a context that helps us properly understand and translate the Shema.

The Old Testament text, like the New Testament, is often used to support the Trinity. But that is not what the verse is saying. For one thing, the Jews do not now, and never have, believed in a Trinity, and yet they have used Deuteronomy 6:4 as the rallying call of the nation of Israel since long before the time of Jesus. Deuteronomy 6:4 can be, and should be, translated close to the way it is translated in a number of modern versions: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (NAB, NLT, NRSV, and the JPS Tanakh). The Geneva Bible of 1599, which was the Bible of the Pilgrims and many of our founding Fathers and is a translation generally recognized by scholars as a better translation than the King James Version, has: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is Lord only.” The Moffatt Bible has: “the Eternal, the Eternal alone, is our God.” *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible* correctly uses God’s proper name, “Yahweh,” instead of “LORD,” and has: “Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God—Yahweh alone.” Using “Yahweh” instead of “LORD” is the most proper way to render the verse, and Rotherham’s translation is about as close as you can get to an English translation that captures the primary meaning of the verse. The Old Testament Jews, to whom Deuteronomy was addressed, thought of Yahweh alone as being their God.

Deuteronomy 6:4 is saying that Israel [and believers today] have only one God—Yahweh. That is why the verse says that Yahweh is “our” God. Other people may have other gods, but the people of God are to have Yahweh alone as their God. This Old Testament truth is confirmed by Christ in Mark 12:29, and reconfirmed by Paul, who wrote that, “to us there is one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6).

Although it is commonly believed that Deuteronomy 6:4 is a statement of “monotheism” and thus the “compound unity” of God, that is not what the verse is saying. Of course, it is a statement about monotheism, that there is one God, but that is not its primary emphasis, as we will see below. Furthermore, it is not a statement about the compound unity of God for a number of reasons. First, because the compound unity of God does not appear in Scripture. Second, the Old Testament was given by God to the Jews so they could know and obey Him, and never in the more than 3500 years since the Shema was written have the Jews understood it to refer to a compound unity in God—quite the opposite. They took it to mean that there was only one God, and fiercely fought against polytheism throughout their history. So if the Shema was God’s attempt to reveal a compound unity in God, the attempt was an epic failure. It makes much more sense that God gave the verse to the Jews and intended it to mean what the Jews say it means. Furthermore, the Jews did not take the Shema as their primary statement of monotheism because many other verses made that point (we will cover that shortly). Third, the context of the Shema in both the Old and New Testaments, backed by the Scope of Scripture, shows that the Shema is not saying “God is ‘one,’ but rather is saying that Yahweh “alone” is our God.

The context shows us that Deuteronomy 6:4 is using the Hebrew word *‘echad* (#0259 אֶחָד; “one, only, an, alone”) in the primary sense of “only” or “alone,” in contrast to the number “one,” and the context in Mark 12 confirms this. Note how Deuteronomy 6:4-5, flow together and thus make a major—and logical—point: “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone! And you must love Yahweh your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.” It is because Yahweh “alone” is God that we can worship him with “all” our heart, “all” our soul, and “all” our might. If we had more than one God, our worship would have to be divided between all the gods we served, and each god would get only “part” of our heart, soul, and strength. In fact, that is what happens with Trinitarians today: they divide their worship of God into the worship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But that division of worship is what is expressly forbidden by Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29.

When Jesus was asked about the first commandment, he quoted both Deuteronomy 6:4 and Deuteronomy 6:5. Interestingly, in both Hebrew and Greek (the Septuagint and Mark 12), these can be one sentence, the second starting with “and,” (or even “and so”). It is traditional to separate the “first commandment” into two sentences, but grammatically it can be one sentence and thus easily seen to be one commandment.

What should be clear is that Deuteronomy 6:4 is a statement about our personal relationship to God. He “alone” is God, so He is to be “our” only God and we must worship Him with “all” that we are and have. Deuteronomy 6:4 is not primarily a statement about monotheism, it is a statement about relationship. Stated another way, Deuteronomy 6:4 is not about the nature of God, it is about our relationship with God. Monotheism is important, and God had established that there was only one God earlier in Deuteronomy. Only about 50 verses before the Shema, God had twice stated that He was the only God. Deuteronomy 4:35 says, “Yahweh is God. There is no one else besides him.” Four verses later Deuteronomy 4:39 establishes that truth and says, “Yahweh, he is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.” After establishing that there is only one God in chapter 4, Deuteronomy 6:4 then takes that truth and makes it personal: Yahweh who alone is God is to be “our” God, and we are to worship Him with “all” our heart, soul, and strength. Furthermore, after Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, and Deuteronomy 6:4 have established that there is only one God, and thus Yahweh alone is to be “our God,” Deuteronomy 6:13 then says that we should fear and serve Him, and swear oaths in His name.

The scope of Scripture also shows us that the Shema is about our relationship with God and not the singular nature of God. For example, Zechariah 14:9 uses the word *’echad* and speaks of the future, saying that Yahweh will be king over the whole earth. The last part of the verse says in that day, “Yahweh will be one [*’echad*], and his name one [*’echad*].” Here we see the same use of *’echad* that we see in the Shema. When Zechariah says that in that day Yahweh will be “one,” it is not making a statement about God’s nature, as if somehow His nature would become “one” in the future but is not “one” now. Rather, it is using “one,” (*’echad*) as “alone,” just as in Deuteronomy 6:4. Zechariah is saying that in the future Yahweh will be “alone” and His name “alone,” not in competition with the names of other gods. Unlike today when many “gods” distract us from God, in the future, all the competing gods will be cast away and Yahweh “alone” will be everyone’s God. Isaiah says, “ On that day, people will throw their silver and gold idols, which they made to worship, to the moles and the bats” (Isa. 2:20 HCSB). Zechariah says, “‘And on that day,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will erase idol worship throughout the land, so that even the names of the idols will be forgotten’” (Zech. 13:2 NLT). Isaiah 2:11 and Isaiah 2:17 say that Yahweh alone will be exalted in that Day.

Also, the very first of the Ten Commandments fits with the Shema, saying that Yahweh alone is to be our God. The First Commandment is: “I am Yahweh your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me” (Exod. 20:2-3; NLT with Yahweh in place of “the LORD”). So the first commandment says in effect the same thing that the Shema says: God alone is to be our God, and we are not to have any other god but Him.

Having seen that the Shema is a statement about our relationship with God and that He “alone” is to be our God, we can now turn our attention to the New Testament text and Jesus’ words in Mark 12:29. As has been stated earlier, there is no doubt that Jesus would have quoted the Shema as it appears in the Hebrew text. He would not have been quoting it in Greek, even though the Gospel of Mark is written in Greek. But when we study the Greek word translated “one” in Mark 12:29, *heis* (#1520 εἷς, pronounced “hace”), we find that just like the Hebrew word *’echad*, can mean “one” or “alone,” so can the Greek word *heis*. In fact, we see *heis* being used in the sense of “alone” several times in the New Testament. The BDAG *Greek English Lexicon* lists Mark 2:7; 10:18; 12:29; Matthew 23:10; and Luke 18:19 as clear examples of *heis* meaning “alone.”

As has been stated above, the Hebrew text is very compressed and hard to translate. A common translation of the Greek is, “The Lord our God is one Lord.” However, a translation that reflects more of the meaning of the verse is, “Hear, Israel, The Lord our God is the only Lord” (that same basic translation appears in: The Geneva Bible; The New English Bible; Sir Andrews Norton’s, *A Translation of the Gospels*; The New Testament by William Barclay; and *The Source New Testament* by A. Nyland). Another good translation is in the New American Bible (NAB), which follows its translation of Deuteronomy and has, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!” Still another good translation is *God’s New Covenant* by Heinz Cassirer. He has: “Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one and only Lord.” Cassirer’s translation should catch our attention because he was born and raised Jewish and taught philosophy at Glasgow University and Corpus Christi, Oxford, and converted to Christianity due to his reading the Greek New Testament. Thus he brings a unique blend of Jewish heritage and a thorough knowledge of both Hebrew and Greek to his translation. He clearly understands that the Shema is making the point that God is the “one and only” God.

How do we know that when Jesus quoted the Shema, he quoted it with the same meaning it had in the Old Testament; that God “alone” was God? We know it by reading the whole account in Mark. We must pay attention to all the elements of the conversation: the question the Pharisee asked, Jesus’ answer, the Pharisee’s commentary on Jesus’ answer, and Jesus’ statement about what the Pharisee said.

First, the Pharisee’s question: “What commandment is the first of all?” We learn from Matthew 22:34 that the question was initially asked to test Jesus. It was a question that the Jews had asked and hotly debated among themselves for centuries, and was a question all the Jews were interested in. It seems clear the Pharisee legitimately wanted to know where Jesus stood on the issue.

Jesus answered the question by quoting both Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, which shows that Jesus understood that it was not enough to just “love God,” in some generic sense, we must love the “right God,” the true God, the only God, who is Yahweh. Jesus then added the second commandment: love your neighbor as yourself. The Pharisee had not asked for that information, but we can see why Jesus added it: the Pharisees were well-known for holding themselves aloof from others, and even the name “Pharisee” means “Separated one,” someone separated from the rest of mankind, who are then relegated by default to a lesser status. Jesus was trying to reach this Pharisee’s heart and teach him that if he loved God, it would show itself through his love for others.

The Pharisee responded to Jesus’ answer in a way that showed he had grasped what Jesus said and had himself come to a similar conclusion about the central point of the Old Testament Law. The Pharisee started by acknowledging that Jesus’ statement was “well said,” and then he connected the Shema with Deuteronomy 4:35, that Yahweh is God and there is no other God but him. The Pharisee did not have any conception of a “compound unity” in God, but rather spoke back to Jesus the simple message of the Old Testament contained in the Shema: Yahweh alone is God and there is no other God, and that is why we can and must love God with “all” our heart, soul, and might. Furthermore, as the Pharisee acknowledged, loving God and our neighbor was more important than all other religious ceremonies and practices.

Jesus immediately recognized the heart of this Pharisee, and said to him: “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” If the Shema was teaching the “compound unity” of God, and if Jesus was trying to communicate that to the Pharisee, he would have immediately recognized by the Pharisee’s answer that he did not “get it.” At that point, Jesus should have further engaged the Pharisee so he could have a chance to understand the compound unity of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. Why didn’t he? The simple answer is that Deuteronomy 4:35 and Deuteronomy 6:4 teach a simple truth: there is one God, Yahweh, and He alone is to be our God. That is the simple point that is being made in both the Old and New Testaments.

Having said that the most pertinent truth in the Shema is that Yahweh alone is to be our God, there are nevertheless some other basic truths that the wording of the Shema shows us. Although the primary meaning is, “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone,” the wording of the Hebrew text and the word *’echad* also allows for: “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is unique.” Although not the primary meaning, if we read the verse that way, it is saying that Yahweh, who is “our God,” is unique among the gods, thus superior and worthy of our worship. The usage of *’echad* as “unique” is found in Song of Songs 6:9, where the king speaks of his 60 queens, 80 concubines, and “young women without number,” but tells his new beloved that she is “unique” (Do you think she believed him?).

Another secondary meaning that can be seen in the very compact wording of Deuteronomy 6:4 is that there is “one” Yahweh. It was common in the cultures of the Middle East that several gods would be known by the same name, or the same god would be assigned different characteristics and worshiped differently in different places. Examples of gods like this include: Astarte, Baal, Cybele, El (a Canaanite god), Isis, Leviathan, Lilith, and Tammuz. In contrast to gods who, in different places had different characteristics and were worshiped differently, Yahweh was only “one” God and was to be known as the same and worshiped the same everywhere.

In the spiritual battle, Satan is always trying to distort God: His nature, His character, His love, and His actions, and God works to prevent that. After the birth of Christ, Satan has worked to distort Jesus too. Thus less than 30 years after Jesus gave his life for mankind, 2 Corinthians 11:4 speaks of those people who preach “another Jesus,” and Galatians 1:6-9 shows that people were perverting the Gospel, saying, “If anyone proclaims to you a Good News that is contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

In closing, it is helpful to speak a few more words about why the Shema cannot be referring to a “compound unity” in God. If the Shema was making the point that God was a compound unity, then neither verse 4 nor verse 5 would fit with what the Bible actually says. The Old Testament never reveals that “Yahweh” was a compound deity, made up of separate “Persons.” Trinitarian theologians acknowledge that the Old Testament does not reveal the Trinity—a major reason the Jews never believed in one. In the Old Testament, “Yahweh” and the Son are always represented as two separate entities. “Yahweh” is the equivalent of the “Father” (or “God”) in the New Testament. Just as the Father and Son occur together many times in the New Testament and are clearly presented as two (cf. “the testimony of two men is true. I am one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me”—John 8:17-18), so the Old Testament presents Yahweh and the “Son” (also referred to as the “Lord,” “Servant,” or “anointed”) as two, not “one God” (cf. Ps. 2:2, 7; 110:1; Isa. 42:5ff; 49:4-5; 53:6, 10, 11). Furthermore, it is clear in the Old Testament texts, such as those that call the Messiah the servant of Yahweh, and in the New Testament texts as well (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28) that the “Son” is subservient to Yahweh. Given that, for the Shema to say that “Yahweh” is “one,” in contrast to many, does not make sense. If the verse were referring to a compound deity, it would have had to say that “Elohim” is one.

Furthermore, if the Shema were saying that “Yahweh” were “one” in the sense of a compound unity, then verse 5 would be incomplete and confusing, rather than helpful. If God were a compound unity, then what the Israelites would need would be instruction as to how to treat each “Person,” i.e., how to worship and serve each “Person” in this compound deity. But instead of offering instruction as to how to worship each “Person,” verse 5 contradicts the idea of multiple “Persons” in God and says to worship “Yahweh” with “all” your heart, soul, and might, clearly treating Yahweh as the one God whom we worship.

Also, Jesus’ answer to the Pharisee, that he was not far from the Kingdom of God, shows us that a person does not have to believe in the Trinity to be saved. We can see from the way the Pharisee spoke to Jesus that he did not believe in the Trinity, but Jesus made no attempt to instruct him and instead said he was not far from the Kingdom. If a person had to believe in the Trinity to be saved, Jesus would have taught the Pharisee about it, and would never have said he was close to the Kingdom.

Mar 12:30

**“and *so*.”** The Greek text has the conjunction *kai*, which is most often translated “and,” but which can have a number of meanings, depending on the context. One of those meanings is that it introduces a result from a preceding circumstance; thus can mean “and then” or “and so,” or as we would say, “so,” or “therefore.”[[78]](#footnote-14645) Rotherham has correctly picked up on the sense of the *kai* in this case, and seen that it makes a logical connection between the first quotation from the Old Testament and the second one, and translated it as “therefore” in *The Emphasized Bible*, and the Geneva Bible of 1599 also uses “therefore.” So translating the *kai* as “therefore,” or as “and so,” more clearly brings out the sense of what Jesus was saying and shows why he prefaced his quotation of Deuteronomy 6:5 by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4.

The original Hebrew phrase taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 also starts with the common conjunction that is most often translated “and” but has a number of different meanings, including “so” and “therefore,”[[79]](#footnote-18334) and the NAB says “therefore.”

The point that we must understand is that the “greatest commandment” is one single command, not two independent statements. There is not one statement that says that there is one God and a second statement that tells us to love Him. Yahweh alone is God so we are to love Him with “all” we are and have. If Yahweh was not God “alone,” not the only God, then we would have to divide our love between our different gods.

**“love.”** The verb “love,” *agapaō*, (#25 ἀγαπάω) is in the future tense, indicative mood, which here is being used idiomatically as a present imperative.[[80]](#footnote-31635) The expert in the Law had asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment, and Jesus gave him (and us), a complete answer. Jesus made it clear that since there is only one God, therefore you must love Him with everything you have: all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In the Greco-Roman culture surrounding the Jews, the people had many gods, and the people had to divide their love and worship between them. For that matter, many of the Jews had superstitions and regulations that had all but replaced a genuine relationship with the true God. Jesus made it clear that there is only one true God, and “therefore” we must love Him with “all” we have.

Given the implied “therefore,” and the fact that “love” is idiomatically an imperative, it would be correct to translate verses 29 and 30: “Jesus answered, ‘The first is, **Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.** Therefore you must love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”

**“and…and…and.”** The elements in the command are each connected with “and,” which is the figure of speech polysyndeton (“many ands.”[[81]](#footnote-25521) The figure polysyndeton places an “and” between each item in the list, and by that literary device emphasizes each thing in the list. Thus, when Jesus says we must love God “with all your heart, **and** with all your soul, **and** with all your mind, **and** with all your strength,” he is specifically emphasizing each point in the list. In normal grammar, only the last item on the list has the “and.”

In contrast to the figure polysyndeton, which emphasizes each item in the list, the figure of speech asyndeton (“no ands”) does not have the word “and” at all, even between the last two items in the list. This means that nothing in the list gets specific emphasis, but the readers are meant to see that while the things on the list are important enough to mention, it is the conclusion that God wants to get the emphasis, and He lets us know that by the figure asyndeton. So while the figure polysyndeton emphasizes each item in the list, the asyndeton emphasizes the conclusion (a good example of asyndeton is the fruit of the spirit in Galatians. See commentary on Gal. 5:22).

There are many good examples of polysyndeton in the Bible, although sometimes the translators do not accurately bring it from the Hebrew or Greek into the English. A good example is Ephesians 1:21, which says that Jesus is seated at God’s right hand, “far above every ruler, **and** authority, **and** power, **and** *those having* dominion, **and** every name that is named.” In Luke 14:21 there is a polysyndeton in Jesus’ parable, which emphasizes each category of people. The head of the house says, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor **and** maimed **and** blind **and** lame.” In the same chapter, in Luke 14:13-14, Jesus was teaching and used an asyndeton to good effect. He said, “But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they do not have *the means* to repay you, for you will be repaid at the Resurrection of the Righteous.” The asyndeton deemphasizes the categories of people and puts the emphasis on the conclusion, “and you will be blessed.”

[See Word Study: “Syndeton.”]

**“soul.”** See commentary on Matthew 22:37.

Mar 12:31

**“neighbor.”** On who is our neighbor, see commentary on Luke 10:27.

Mar 12:33

“**with all your intelligence.”** The Greek word translated as “intelligence” is also used for one’s “understanding.” To love God with “all your intelligence” is to think deeply about God, to study God, to use the intelligence that you have to learn more about Him and thus be better connected to Him.

**“neighbor.”** On who is our neighbor, see commentary on Luke 10:27.

Mar 12:34

**“And after that no one dared.”** In the honor-shame society of the biblical world, to ask a person a question was to challenge them, and if the person could not answer the question they were shamed and the one asking was elevated, but if the question was answered, then the person who asked the question was shamed and the one who gave the answer was elevated. In this social context, Jesus had done such a good job answering difficult questions that no one else wanted to risk being publicly shamed, so no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

Mar 12:36

**“The Lord said to my Lord.”** The quotation is from Psalm 110:1, and it is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36, and Luke 20:42-43. Psalm 110:1 is a very important verse theologically. For one thing, it shows that Jesus is not equal to God (see commentary on Ps. 110:1).

[For more information on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son,” and see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“by the holy spirit.”** David spoke as God directed him via the gift of holy spirit that was upon David (see commentary on Matt. 22:43). Even though the Greek has both articles with holy spirit, *tō pneuma tō hagion* (τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίω), it seems to be more of a reference to the gift of holy spirit than it is to the Giver, God. There are many other times the gift of holy spirit has both articles (cf. Luke 3:22; John 14:26; Acts 2:33; 5:32; 10:44, 47; 11:15; 15:8; 19:6; Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 4:8).

[For more information on the uses of “Holy Spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’” For more information on the holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 12:37

**“and *so* how is he his son?”** Jesus is the Son of David (cf. Matt. 1:1; 9:27; Luke 18:38-39, etc.), so this question is inviting a discussion on the subject.

**“was listening to him with delight.”** The Greek we translate as “listening to him with delight” is *hēdeōs* (#2234 ἡδέως, pronounced hay-'de-ōs) and it means with pleasure, with delight, gladly. Some versions catch the sense by saying that the crowds “enjoyed” listening to him. We should not take this to mean that the crowds took to heart what Jesus said and then changed. In Mark 6:20 the same phraseology is used when Herod Antipas used to call for John the Baptist, and “liked to listen to him.” Jesus taught openly, but still only had some 120 disciples gathered on the Day of Pentecost. If anything, this shows how people can hear the Word of God taught, even from the Master himself, enjoy it, but not have it change their lives.

Mar 12:40

**“They cheat widows out of their houses.”** The text is literally, “devour widows’ houses.” These “experts in the Law” were in a position to help widows through the legal steps of securing their belongings after a husband died, but instead, they found “legal ways” to take things away from the widow’s estate, apparently occasionally even leaving them homeless. The evil of these “experts” was deliberately covered up with shows of holiness, such as praying long prayers in public.

**“harsher punishment.”** The REV takes the sense of *krima* (#2917 κρίμα)—along with the KJV, NET, NIV, and HCSB translations—to indicate both the judgment and execution of the sentence.[[82]](#footnote-13677) Hence, *krima* becomes “punishment” rather than “condemnation;” and the comparative adjective *perissoteros* (#4055 περισσότερος) becomes “harsher” rather than “greater.”

Mar 12:41

**“the offering box.”** There was a specific place in the Temple where offerings were put, and it was like an “offering box.” It was not the Temple treasury.

Mar 12:42

**“Two leptons.”** The Greek says “lepta” which is the plural of “lepton.” The lepton was a small, common, brass coin minted by the Jews. According to this verse, two leptons equal one quadrans (the Roman quadrans was the smallest Roman coin and was worth 1/4 of an assarion, which was 1/64 of a denarius.) A denarius was a day’s wage for a common laborer, so if a laborer makes eight dollars an hour for eight hours, or 64 dollars a day, a quadrans was worth one dollar. Since two leptons equaled a quadrans, one lepton was worth about a half dollar.

Coins are one area where it is hard to translate. We feel that “penny” is misleading. For one thing, at the rates we assigned here, a lepton is worth $.50. Similarly, while “mite” communicates a small amount, it is unclear, and the reader may think that the Bible is making the point that the woman cast a small amount into the treasury and not realize that it points out exactly how much she cast in. It was a small amount, but it was exactly described in the biblical text as being two leptons, not just “a small amount.” This is a case where the best solution is likely to keep the coin in the text and make a text note as to the amount it is worth.

**Mark Chapter 13**

Mar 13:6

**“come in my name, saying, ‘I am *he.*’”** See commentary on Matthew 24:5, where the text specifies that the “he” is the Messiah, the Christ. This is a great example of using the common phrase “I am” as a simple identifier, basically “I am he,” or “I am the one in question.” (See commentary on John 8:58).

Mar 13:7

**“wars *nearby* and reports of wars *far away*.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:6.

Mar 13:8

**“group.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:7.

Mar 13:9

**“courts.”** “Courts” is a good translation of the generic use of “Sanhedrin,” which was not the “great Sanhedrin” that convened in Jerusalem and made up of 70 members, but the concept of “lesser Sanhedrin” that were the Jewish courts that met wherever Jews would be tried by other Jews.

**“because of me.”** For an explanation of this phrase, see the REV commentary on Matthew 5:11.

Mar 13:11

**“the holy spirit.”** Here in Mark 13:11, “the holy spirit” is the gift of God’s nature that God put upon people to empower them with spiritual power. We can see that Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:12 use “holy spirit” as the gift of God from the parallel verse in Matthew 10:20. In the Old Testament and Gospels, when God wanted to empower someone with spiritual power so they could prophesy or do great feats, He placed His gift of holy spirit upon them (cf. Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; Mic. 3:8). God placed His gift of holy spirit on Jesus Christ for the same reason; so that he could be spiritually empowered (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:6; Luke 4:18).

It is easy to see how there could be some debate about the meaning of “holy spirit” in this verse. The original Greek text was written in all capital letters, so the text always said “HOLY SPIRIT no matter if the reference was to God, the Holy Spirit, or to His gift, the holy spirit. Besides that, God generates the messages He wants to give to people (which He now gives to Jesus to give to people). So, before Jesus was glorified, revelation from God generally came from the Holy Spirit through the holy spirit to the believer. In the context of the message coming from God through His gift, which is the case here, from a practical standpoint, the way the message got to the believer did not need to be debated—both God and His gift were involved.

On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), Jesus Christ poured out the gift of holy spirit on everyone who believed (Acts 2:33, 38), and that gave them spiritual power (Acts 1:8).

[For more information on the uses of “spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’” For more on the difference between Holy Spirit and holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Mar 13:14

**“standing where he should not be.”** The translations differ as to whether the text should read, where “he” should not be, or where “it” should not be. Some translations support “he” (ASV, ESV, NAB, NLT), while others support “it” (CJB, HCSB, NASB, NET, RSV). The grammar can be argued either way, as anyone who reads a few commentaries on the verse will discover.[[83]](#footnote-20506) Blass and Debrunner point out that a masculine participle referring to a neuter noun can designate a person.[[84]](#footnote-13551)

Since the grammar can legitimately be “he” or “it,” the meaning of the verse must be interpreted from the scope of Scripture. The “abomination of desolation,” which refers to an abomination that causes desolation, is not a statue, but a person. Furthermore, not a historical person such as Antiochus Epiphanes (although he may have been a type for the Antichrist), but a person who will be manifested in the Last Days, whom we know as the Antichrist or Man of Lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:3ff), who goes into the Temple of God to show that he is a god.

Mar 13:15

**“not come down.”** People could generally travel from roof to roof. See commentary on Matthew 24:17.

Mar 13:17

**“But how terrible.”** This warning is also in Matthew 24:19.

**“how terrible.”** The Greek word is *ouai* (#3759 οὐαί, pronounced ooh-'eye). For an explanation of the meaning of “how terrible,” see commentary on Matthew 11:21.In this context, *ouai* is an expression of grief because of the distress, hardship, and divine retribution that is coming in the future (1 Cor. 9:16; Rev. 9:12). People who cannot easily travel or who have to take care of others will have a very hard time in the Great Tribulation.

Mar 13:19

**“tribulation unlike anything that has happened.”** This is the time of “great tribulation” Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:21. Jesus would have learned a lot about the Tribulation period from the Old Testament. This great tribulation is the subject of much of the book of Revelation, with its seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, and seven bowls of judgment.

[For more on the prophecies of the Great Tribulation, see commentary on Isa. 13:9.]

Mar 13:21

**“Messiah.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:5.

Mar 13:22

**“Messiahs.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:5.

Mar 13:23

**“But be on guard.”** The Greek text would be more literally translated as “Watch!” or “Watch out.” But we typically say “Watch out” when there is immediate danger right then and there, which is not the case here. A number of English versions read “be on guard” (ESV, GW, NIV, NJB).

**“I have told you everything beforehand.”** This is a good example of where “everything” (or “all”) has to be taken in a limited sense (see commentary on John 21:17).

Mar 13:27

**“gather together his chosen ones.”** This is the first resurrection, and includes both the elect on earth (cf. Matt. 25:32) and the dead who are righteous and who will live with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Ezek. 37:12-14; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:4-6).

Mar 13:29

**“door.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:33.

Mar 13:31

**“Heaven and earth will pass away.”** This sentence is almost exactly the same in Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33.

Mar 13:32

**“nor the Son.”** This is also stated in Matthew 24:36. This phrase is omitted in many Greek texts of Matthew 24:36 and so some people assert that it was added to the original text of Matthew even though the textual evidence is stronger that it was not added in Matthew. However, the textual evidence is extremely clear that the phrase “nor the Son” is original here in Mark 13:32. For the impact of this phrase on Christian theology, see commentary on Matthew 24:36.

Mar 13:33

**“Stay alert**!**”** Some Greek texts add “pray” to this verse and read, “Stay alert and pray,” but “pray” is omitted in some early and important manuscripts and therefore is much more likely added to the text than omitted from it. The scribes who copied the text sometimes added things that they themselves did, such as pray or fast.

Mar 13:35

**“during the evening *watch*.”** At the time of Christ, in both Jewish and Roman reckoning of time, the “day” was divided into 12 hours (John 11:9, “Are there not 12 hours in the day?). Also, both the Jews and Romans divided the night into four “watches,” each being three hours long. This was true even though the Jews started their new day at sunset, at the start of the first watch of the night, and the Romans reckoned their new day at midnight, at the start of the third watch of the night (our day beginning at midnight comes from the Romans). In New Testament times, the day was divided into 12 “hours” (John 11:9) and the night into four “watches”: 1st: 6-9 p.m.; 2nd: 9 p.m.-midnight; 3rd: midnight-3 a.m.; 4th: 3-6 a.m. (Mark 13:35).

The names of the four watches are named in the commentary on Mark 6:48, and were “evening watch,” “midnight watch,” “cockcrowing watch,” and “morning watch.” Sometimes, however, the watches were just called by “first watch,” “second watch,” “third watch,” and “fourth watch.”

[For more on time in the Bible, and the four watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

Mar 13:36

**“when he comes unexpectedly.”** The Lord comes “unexpectedly.” The Greek word can also mean “suddenly,” and that can be part of the meaning here.

**Mark Chapter 14**

Mar 14:1

**“it was two days before the Passover.”** The Greek text is more literally, “after two days was the Passover.”

**“crafty way.”** The Greek word is *dolos* (#1388 δόλος), and its meanings include, craftily, deceitfully, treacherously, and stealthily.

Mar 14:2

**“Not during the feast.”** The original plan of the Jews was not to arrest Jesus during the Passover, but Jesus forced their hand and their plans got accelerated. Jesus knew he had to die as the Passover Lamb, and so he accelerated the plans of the enemy (see commentary on John 13:27).

Mar 14:3

**“And while he was in Bethany.”** This event about Jesus being anointed in Bethany is recorded in Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8. Judas Iscariot started the discontent and murmuring (John 12:4), and it spread to the others.

**“Simon the Leper.”** Simon had had a skin disease of some kind, but he was now cured or people would not have been in his house. Nevertheless, the name “Simon the Leper” stuck.

**“on his head.”** This record of Mary (we learn it was Mary from John 12:3) pouring the oil on Jesus occurs in Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; and John 12:1-8; it is not included in Luke. Mark says the ointment was poured on the head, while John 12:3 says Mary anointed Jesus’ feet. The key to the apparent contradiction is realizing that Mary had a lot of ointment, and put it on both Jesus’ head and feet.

[For more information on this anointing and the controversy it stirred up, see commentary on John 12:3.]

Mar 14:4

**“But there were some who were angry.”** The Greek word translated as “angry” is *aganakteō* (#23 ἀγανακτέω), and it refers to being angry or displeased at a situation that is perceived to be unjust. This verse is hard to translate, and so the versions differ considerably. A literal rendition would be something like, “There were some being indignant with each other.” Of course, they were not being indignant with each other, they were indignant about what they now considered a waste of money, and were commenting to each other about it. Some versions say they were indignant “within themselves,” or “said to themselves,” but that can be misunderstood. The ones who were indignant were saying things among themselves, i.e., among their little disgruntled group, but not within their own minds, and thus “talking to themselves.”

The Gospel of John lets us know that this verbal poison of grumbling and indignation started with Judas Iscariot, who was a thief and stole from the money that Jesus and the disciples received (John 12:4-6). From Judas, this discontent spread through the room and infected some of the believers. Jesus cut it off quickly and decisively. “Leave her alone…” etc. Christians need to learn from this record. A little evil (leaven) goes through the whole loaf of bread. We need to respond quickly to evil.

[For more on Judas being a thief and starting the grumbling that infected the rest of the apostles, see commentary on John 12:4.]

Mar 14:5

**“scolding her harshly.”** See commentary on John 11:33.

Mar 14:6

**“why are you giving her trouble?”** The disciples were criticizing Mary (Mark 14:5), and Jesus acted quickly here to protect her. He ignored any implication that he had allowed this to happen.

Mar 14:7

**“For you will always...but you will not.”** The Greek text is present tense, “you do...you do not,” but the clear implication is Jesus is speaking of the future.

Mar 14:8

**“she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.”** The perfume was very expensive and therefore likely quite strong, so it is possible that there could have been a faint smell of it even days later when Jesus was buried. It is impossible to know what the disciples thought Jesus meant when he spoke of his burial. They did not expect him to die, much less be buried. However, it is possible that Mary, of all the disciples, actually understood and believed what Jesus said when he taught that he was going to die, and that she anointed his body with that in mind (see Matt. 26:12).

Mar 14:10

**“Iscariot.”** See the commentary on Matthew 10:4 for more information.

Mar 14:12

**“the first day of the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread.”** This same phrase is used in Matthew 26:17 (see the commentary on Matt. 26:17).

Mar 14:17

**“he came with the Twelve.”** Matthew, Mark, and Luke all agree that Jesus ate the Last Supper with the twelve apostles (Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:17, and Luke 22:14). That makes sense because much of the Last Supper was instruction and guidance that they needed to be able to start and run what would become the Christian Church.

Mar 14:21

**“will go *to die*.”** A meaning of this verb is “to die.”[[85]](#footnote-31295)

**“but how terrible it will be for that man.”** This warning is in Matthew 26:24, Mark 14:21, and Luke 22:22 (see commentary on Matt. 26:24).

Mar 14:24

**“This is my blood of the covenant.”** See commentary on Luke 22:20.

Mar 14:25

**“when I drink new wine in the Kingdom of God.”** At the Last Supper Jesus promised his apostles that he would not drink wine again until he drank it with them in the Kingdom of God, also called the Kingdom of Heaven, which will be the Messianic Kingdom on the restored earth. The REV has “new wine,” but the Greek uses the word “it,” and in this case, the “it” refers to what is being drunk, which is the wine. This is clear in the Greek, which is an inflected language, but it is not clear in English if the Greek is translated literally. Saying in English, “until that day I drink new it” makes no sense, so the REV replaces the “it” with what the “it” refers to, which is wine.

[For more on Jesus’ promise not to drink wine until the Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 26:29.]

Mar 14:31

**“I will never deny you.”** The Greek uses a double negative here for emphasis. The text does not just say, “not deny you,” the phrase is much stronger than that.

Mar 14:34

**“soul.”** See commentary on Matthew 26:38.

**“*almost* to the point of death.”** The Greek is more literally simply “to death.” The Greek phrase “to the point of death” means “that his sorrow is so great that he is hardly able to bear it.”[[86]](#footnote-32556) Jesus is not saying that his sorrow will literally result in his death, but the phrase is idiomatic and means that he is very deeply grieved. We use the same idiomatic phraseology when saying things like, “I am freezing to death,” or, “I am starving to death.” The word death is more idiomatic than literal and expresses the depth of the emotion.

Mar 14:36

**“Abba! Father!”** This phrase is used here in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6. See commentary on Galatians 4:6.

Mar 14:38

**“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** The Greek text contrasts the spirit and flesh quite strongly. This is the use of “spirit” that refers to the action of the mind, i.e., attitudes and emotions. The apostles had a willing attitude, but their flesh was weak and unable to stay awake.

[For more on “spirit,” including a long list of the ways it is used in the Bible, see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’”]

Mar 14:41

**“Are you still sleeping and resting?**” Jesus was amazed that the disciples could not stay awake and pray in this challenging hour for him. The REV translation is very similar to the translation in the CSB, ESV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV). See commentary on Matthew 26:45.

**“Look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Mar 14:42

**“Look”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Mar 14:43

**“and with him *was* a crowd.”** This “crowd” consisted of both Jewish police and Roman soldiers (see commentary on John 18:3).

Mar 14:48

**“as *if I were* a criminal?”** The group that came to arrest Jesus had swords and clubs, but beyond that, it was a large group with both Roman soldiers and Temple police. Here in Mark 14:48, the translation of the Greek word *lēstēs* (#3027 λῃστής) is likely “criminal” but it has a wide range of meaning. When it is used of Barabbas, the translation is most likely referring to the leader of a rebellion (see commentary on John 18:40).

Mar 14:49

**“let the scriptures be fulfilled.”** This is a command clause. In the original language, this is composed of *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) and the verb for “fulfilled,” *plēroō* (#4137 πληρόω), in the subjunctive mood. See commentary on John 9:3, “let the works of God be revealed in him.” It should not be translated as a purpose clause: “*this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures” (such as NASB, NET, NAB, ASV), but as a command clause: “Let the scriptures be fulfilled.” Reading it as a purpose clause requires the phrase “this has taken place” to be supplied in order to complete the thought because it is not in the Greek. The fact that the *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive clause stands alone makes the command clause a less forced reading.

Mar 14:53

**“And they led Jesus away to the high priest.”** This statement puts two events, Jesus being taken first to Annas and later to Caiaphas into one sentence and simply says that Jesus was taken to the High Priest. Mark does not clarify that Jesus was taken first to Annas, and from Annas to Caiaphas, but that is recorded in the Gospel of John (John 18:13, 24). Annas was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, and from the biblical record and archaeological evidence, Annas and Caiaphas lived side by side in a family compound, which was not unusual. That would also explain how Peter could follow what was happening to Jesus through the night even though the Gospels seem to have him in the same general area. The compound in which Annas and Caiaphas lived would have had a big yard and been surrounded by a fence or wall, which explains why Peter had to be let into the area through a gate (John 18:16), but did not have to go through another gate when Jesus was taken from Annas to Caiaphas. So, Jesus was taken to Annas first, and because he had been the High Priest he was still thought of that way (cf. Acts 4:6), then to Caiaphas, the Roman-appointed High Priest, and it was at Caiaphas’ house that all the chief priests and elders gathered (Matt. 26:57), then in the morning they all took Jesus to the Sanhedrin for a daybreak trial (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71), then they took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

[For more about the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas, and also more on the chronology of the last week of Christ’s life from his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane to his appearances on Sunday after his crucifixion, see commentary on John 18:13. For more information about Jesus being in the tomb, “the heart of the earth,” for three full days and three nights, see commentary on Matt. 12:40. For information on the chronology of the four trials of Jesus on Tuesday (before the Jewish Sanhedrin, then Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate) see commentary on John 19:14, “the sixth hour.” For information on the two-stage burial of Jesus, first by Joseph of Arimathea and then by Nicodemus, see commentary on John 19:40. For information on the Hasmonean palace as the likely location of Jesus’ trial before Pilate, see commentary on Luke 23:7.]

Mar 14:58

**“I will destroy this Temple.”** This is not what Jesus said! Jesus was speaking to the Jews in the Temple and he said, “If you destroy this temple, I will raise it up in three days.” See commentary on John 2:19. The reason that what these false witnesses said was so important at the trial of Jesus is that in the Greco-Roman world, the destruction of a temple was a capital offense, and if Jesus was convicted of that he could be put to death.[[87]](#footnote-13723) However, the false witnesses did not agree because what they said Jesus said was not what he had actually said.

**“and in three days I will build another not made by *human* hands.”** See commentary on John 2:19.

Mar 14:61

**“the Blessed One.”** The Greek text reads, “the Blessed,” using the adjective “blessed” as a substantive, which implies a noun following. “The Blessed One” is God, the Father.

Mar 14:62

**“I am.”** Jesus clearly answered that he was the Christ, answering with “I am”; the Greek is *egō eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι). Jesus did not play word games with the Jews or with Pilate, but told them he was the Christ (see commentary on Matt. 27:11).

**“you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”** Jesus is speaking to the leaders in front of him and saying that they would see him come in the clouds of heaven, which was a way of affirming that he was the “Son of Man” who was foretold in Daniel 7:13, who would be given rulership over the whole earth by Yahweh. What Jesus said here in Mark 14:62 (cf. Matt. 26:64) fits with what Jesus said to other people at other places in the Gospels, that they would be alive to see Jesus when he came in the clouds of heaven. Jesus apparently thought he would return soon and spoke that way in a number of places in the Gospels.

It is important for us to know, in order to properly understand the Bible, that the way the Jews thought about Daniel 7:13—that the “Son of Man” would come in the clouds of heaven—was not what we Christians think about today. They did not know that the Messiah would even die, much less ascend into heaven. Not even the apostles knew that, even at the Last Supper (cf. John 14:5; 16:16-18). To them, Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven meant more like what Ezekiel saw when he saw a great bright cloud coming toward him in which was Yahweh (Ezek. 1:4) or when the cloud of God’s glory filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14). So the “Son of Man” coming in the clouds of heaven” was to them a way of saying that when the Messiah came he would be covered with the glory of God. We today know more than the Jews of Christ’s time knew. We know Christ actually ascended into heaven and that he will return from heaven, but also he will almost certainly be covered with the clouds of God’s glory.

**“the Power”** is a circumlocution for God.[[88]](#footnote-19586)

[For a more complete explanation of this verse, see the parallel record and commentary on Matt. 26:64. For more on Jesus speaking about his Second Coming occurring soon, see commentary on Matt. 16:28. For more on the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Mar 14:64

**“blasphemy.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία, pronounced blas-fay-'me-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Mar 14:65

**“the *Temple* police.”** The Temple in Jerusalem was a huge enterprise that ran 24 hours a day every day of the year with all kinds of activities, sacrifices, offerings, cleansing rituals, and much more. There were thousands of priests involved, and some of them were organized into a police force to enforce the rules of the Law and to stop illegal activity such as theft.

Mar 14:67

**“she noticed Peter.”** The Greek text is more literally, “she saw Peter,” but in this case, the woman saw him and noticed who he was.

Mar 14:68

**“he denied it.”** For more on the denials of Peter, see commentary on Matthew 26:70.

Mar 14:71

**“he began to curse.”** Peter began to call curses down upon himself if he was lying and did in fact know Jesus. A curse in the biblical culture was meant to invoke punishment on a person if what they said proved to be false. Lenski writes: “He went on to anathematize and to swear, i.e., to call down all manner of evil on himself if he, indeed, knew this man, and he did this with high and holy oaths to God to have him witness that he, indeed, did not know this man. We see from Peter’s frantic action that he is ready to resort to almost anything to save himself from discovery.”[[89]](#footnote-22447)

**“swear.”** The word “swear” means to swear with an oath. Today we sometimes use the word “swear” to simply refer to using a “dirty, four-letter word,” but that is not what “swear” meant in biblical times.

Mar 14:72

**“the words.”** The Greek text has “the word,” which is a collective singular. In English, we would say “the words” for clarity.

**“he broke down and began to cry.”** The Greek text indicates that Peter broke down and cried (cf. CSB17, ESV, NET, NIV, NLT).

**Mark Chapter 15**

Mar 15:1

**“after making a plan​.”** The Greek is *sumboulion* (#4824 συμβούλιον), and it refers to a meeting or the decision that those in the meeting have reached. Hence some translations have “held a consultation” (ESV), while others have something like “formed a plan,” and Lenski has “having passed a resolution.”[[90]](#footnote-10500) This was the morning trial of the Sanhedrin. Some of them had met the night before, first at Annas’ house (John 18:13-23) and then with Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:24-27). However, the whole Sanhedrin was not present then, and besides, a night trial was technically illegal. Now, in the morning, the whole Sanhedrin is present to condemn Jesus, and they do condemn him (cf. Matt. 27:1; Luke 22:66-71). Therefore, it is true that the Sanhedrin both held a consultation, formed a plan, and reached a resolution as to what to do with Jesus, and then they took him to Pilate, who had the authority to execute him.

Mar 15:2

**“Are you the king of the Jews?”** Pilate’s question, “Are you the king of the Jews,” and Jesus’ affirmative answer, “Yes,” is very important, both for Pilate and for us, and it is recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; and John 18:33 and 18:37). The question and answer also show us that this interaction was in the first of Jesus’ two trials before Pilate, something that is made clear in Luke (Luke 23:1-19). Neither Matthew, Mark, nor John mention Pilate sending Jesus to Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12), but they blend Jesus’ two trials before Pilate as if they were one trial. However, by studying all four Gospels together we can see that this was part of Jesus’ first trial before Pilate and when Mark speaks of Barabbas (Mark 15:6-15), that was part of Jesus’ second trial before Pilate.

**“*Yes, it is as* you say.”** Jesus answered Pilate’s question in the affirmative, that, yes, he is a king. It is important to translate this verse in the affirmative. Jesus was not playing word games with Pilate, giving him an ambiguous answer (see commentary on Matt. 27:11, “*Yes, it is as* you say”).

Mar 15:7

**“Barabbas.”** Barabbas was a “notorious” prisioner (Matt. 27:16).

[For more information on Barabbas, see the commentary on Matt. 27:16.]

**“the rebellion.”** That is, “the rebellion” in which the “rebels” were involved.

Mar 15:12

**“continued *to ask*.”** Although the Greek word *apokrinomai* (#611 ἀποκρίνομαι) typically means to “answer” the REV renders the phrase *palin apokritheis* (πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς) as “continue” to indicate the continuation of discourse. For the nuance of “continue” as a translation of *apokrinomai* see BDAG.

Mar 15:14

**“Crucify him!”** This is not the same crowd that had said, “Hosanna,” and “Son of David” some days earlier. See commentary on Luke 23:21.

Mar 15:16

**“the governor’s headquarters.”** The Greek text is “the praetorium,” and the praetorium was normally the headquarters of the residence of the Roman governor. The exact place that was called the praetorium is debated. Roman Catholics mostly say it was the Antonia Fortress north of the Temple. Protestant scholars mostly tend to say it was Herod’s western palace. However, it is likely that in this case, the praetorium was the ancient Hasmonean place in the middle of Jerusalem (see commentary on Luke 23:7; John 18:28).

**“the whole cohort *of Roman soldiers*.”** The standard size of a cohort was 600 men. It was one-tenth of a “legion,” which was 6,000 men. However, just as the size of a “legion” was almost never exactly 6,000 men, and was often considerably smaller, that same was true of a cohort. It is unlikely that this cohort was fully 600 men. It was likely smaller, but it still would have been a lot of men.

Mar 15:17

**“purple.”** Purple dye was rare and very expensive, so these soldiers went to great lengths to mock Jesus whom they thought was a pretend king (see commentary on 2 Chron. 3:14).

Mar 15:19

**“paid homage.”** In kneeling down before Jesus, they acted like they were paying homage to him. This was a continuation of the mocking of Jesus. The soldiers were not sincere about it. See commentary on Matthew 2:2.

Mar 15:20

**“mocked.”** The Greek word translated “mocked” is *empaizō* (#1702 ἐμπαίζω), and means “mock,” “make fun of,” “ridicule.” See commentary on Matthew 27:29.

Mar 15:21

**“coming in from the countryside.”** That is, coming into Jerusalem, which was a walled city.

Mar 15:22

**“Place of *the* Skull.”** There is very good evidence that Jesus Christ was crucified on top of the Mount of Olives, and the place of the “skull” was the place of counting (see commentary on Matt. 27:33).

Mar 15:23

**“And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh.”** The myrrh was bitter, thus Matthew refers to it as “gall” because “gall” is bitter (Matt. 27:34). Wine mixed with myrrh was sometimes offered to people being crucified because the myrrh deadened the senses, stupefied the person, and thus helped to lessen the pain. Jesus refused it because he needed full control of his senses and the suffering was part of the redemption of humankind.

Mar 15:24

**“And they crucified him.”** The Bible says that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. This is one of the proofs that Jesus Christ existed and was the origin of the Christian Faith. Roman crucifixion was incredibly cruel and horrific. The criminal was whipped, then forced to carry the patibulum (the crosspiece of the cross), then his naked body was nailed or tied (or both) to a cross and suspended for all to see and many to mock and disparage. No wonder the Law of Moses said that people who were hung on a tree were cursed (Deut. 21:22-23; Gal. 3:13).

David Chapman writes, “And it is difficult to understand how Christians would have proclaimed a ***crucified*** Messiah and Saviour, unless such a crucifixion had actually occurred. In reporting this event, the New Testament texts provide significant details regarding the procedures employed in crucifixion (e.g., preceded by scourging, the carrying of the ***patibulum*** by the victim, the use of nails, the posting of a ***titulus,*** mob derision, etc.)”[[91]](#footnote-18261)

There is good evidence that Jesus Christ was crucified on the Mount of Olives (see commentary on Matt. 27:33).

Mar 15:25

**“third hour.”** About our 9 a.m. Both the Jews and Romans divided the day into 12 hours, starting at daylight, roughly 6 a.m.

[For the hours of the day and the watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

**“when they crucified him.”** Although the text uses “*kai*” here which is typically translated as “and,” *kai* can also carry this meaning of “when.”[[92]](#footnote-13282) It is also worth noting that there are some manuscripts that have “*ote*” here instead of *kai*, which means “when.” For these reasons, we have translated this phrase “when they crucified him.” Also, this is the most natural way to understand the text. It would make no sense for Mark to tell us that it was the third hour and then go on to say “and they crucified him,” and then for us to conclude that he was crucified at some later hour after the third hour.

Mar 15:28

The earliest and best manuscripts of the Alexandrian and the Western text types lack Mark 15:28. Bruce Metzger remarks that “It is understandable that copyists could have added the sentence in the margin from Luke 22:37.”[[93]](#footnote-24385)

Mar 15:29

**“insults.”** See commentary on Matthew 27:39.

**“rebuild.”** The Greek text is just “build,” not “rebuild,” but in both Hebrew and Greek the word “build” is used for rebuilding and for building up a building, city, etc.

Mar 15:33

**“the sixth hour.”** The sixth hour is noon our time. Both the Jews and Romans divided the day into 12 hours, starting at daylight, roughly 6 a.m.

[For the hours of the day and the watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

Mar 15:34

**“the ninth hour.”** The ninth hour is 3 p.m. our time. According to the Hebrew text of Exodus 12:6, the Passover Lamb was to be slain “between the evenings.” The early evening started when the sun could clearly be seen to be falling and the day started to cool off, and the later evening was as the sun was going down or had just gone down. By the time of Christ, the Passover Lamb was slain at the ninth hour, about our 3 p.m. Thus Jesus died at the same time the lamb was being slain in the Temple, just a few hundred yards to the west of the Mount of Olives where Christ was crucified.

[For the hours of the day and the watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

**“Eloi, Eloi.”** This is Aramaic, and a quotation of an Aramaic text of Psalm 22. C. S. Mann writes, “The Greek *Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthanei* is the transliteration of an Aramaic original which can only be described as ‘Hebraized.’ …Presumably, Mark’s community would be more accustomed to the Aramaic, and this would be reflected if Mark was using a Palestinian tradition. …Matthew has *Eli*, which is closer to the Hebrew form…it would appear likely that it was said in Hebrew, for the comment, ‘he is calling Elijah’ makes sense only if the cry was *elei*, *elei*, or *eli*, *eli*, rather than Mark’s *eloi*.”[[94]](#footnote-25106)

So it seems most likely that Matthew, who originally wrote in Hebrew, correctly copied what Jesus spoke in Hebrew, while Mark translated what Jesus said into Aramaic and Greek.

[For more information see commentary on Matt. 27:46.]

**“My God, my God.”** Jesus’ words on the cross are evidence that he was not God, but was fully human and was who he claimed to be, the Son of God. God does not have a God, and the fact that Jesus referred to God being his God before his death and resurrection when he was on the cross, (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), after his resurrection but before his ascension (John 20:17), and after he ascended to heaven (Rev. 3:12) is good evidence that Jesus is not God. Revelation 1:5-6 also says that Jesus is a faithful witness and ruler and has made us priests to “his God.” In the Old Testament, the prophet spoke of the coming Messiah and said he would shepherd the people “in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God” (Mic. 5:4; cf. Isa. 49:5, where the Messiah is foretold to call Yahweh, “my God”).

[For more on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

Mar 15:35

**“And some of those who stood by, when they heard this…”** Christ was so beaten and swollen and so dehydrated from loss of blood that his enunciation was not clear and he was misunderstood by some of the crowd.

Mar 15:36

**“wine vinegar.”** Wine vinegar is made by fermenting wine until it sours and becomes vinegar, and it was sometimes given to a man being crucified to quench the raging thirst that the man suffered as his body dehydrated in the sun. In this case, the soldiers had some wine vinegar on hand to give to the men being crucified (see commentary on John 19:29).

**“Leave him alone!”** There are variations in the Greek texts, for example, some say “You (singular) leave him alone,” instead of, “You (plural) leave him alone!” But in the end, “Leave him alone” seems to be the best reading. Although some English versions leave it out entirely, it is in the preferred Greek text.

Mar 15:38

**“was torn in two from the top to the bottom.”** That the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom not only showed that God tore the veil, but the act was also likely very symbolic. It showed the extreme grief God experienced when His only begotten son died (see commentary on Matt. 27:51).

Mar 15:39

**“saw how he died.”** The Greek is literally, “breathed out,” which is a euphemism, in which “breathed out” was used to mean “die.”[[95]](#footnote-29457) The centurion had been there watching Jesus and saw the way in which he died. He heard the things he said and saw what happened as he was on the cross. From that, he concluded that what he certainly must have heard about Jesus was true, that he was the Son of God.

One of the most notable things that the Roman centurion could have seen that led him to conclude that Jesus was the Son of God was that at the exact time that Jesus died the curtain of the Temple was split from top to bottom (Mark 15:38), and the only place in Jerusalem from which that could be seen was the top of the Mount of Olives, which had a wonderful view of the east side of the Temple. That the centurion apparently saw the Temple veil tear is good supporting evidence that Jesus was crucified on top of the Mount of Olives.

[For more evidence that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives, see commentary on Matt. 27:33.]

**“Truly this man was the Son of God.”** The claims of Jesus to be the Son of God would have been well-known, as well as the miracles he did, and the fact that the religious leaders wanted him crucified because they envied him. Thus it is not hard to believe that the centurion, upon seeing the love of the Christ (Father, forgive them, etc.), his bravery, and all the miracles and signs that accompanied his death, would be convinced that this man was in fact who he claimed to be, and indeed, who the sign over his head said he was.

Mar 15:40

**“Mary Magdalene.”** Mary is called “Magdalene” because her hometown was Magdala, on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee.

[For more information on Mary Magdalene see commentary on Luke 8:2.]

Mar 15:43

**“Joseph of Arimathea.”** Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. See commentary on Matthew 27:58.

**“and boldly went in before Pilate.”** Up until this time, the indication in Scripture is that Joseph had not made a bold and open stand on what he believed about Jesus, but in this situation, he had to. There were many people taking notice of Joseph asking for, and getting, the body of Jesus, so no doubt after this Joseph had many people ask him why he wanted the body and why he would bury the body of Jesus in his own tomb. Joseph’s discipleship was now out in the open, which took great boldness.

Mar 15:45

“**he granted the corpse to Joseph..”** By ordinary Roman law, a dead criminal belonged to the state, although in most cases anyone who wanted the body could have it. But that is why Pilate had to grant the corpse to Joseph.

Mar 15:46

**“laid him in a tomb.”** This was just before sunset Wednesday evening, so it was Nisan 14.

[For more information on a Wednesday crucifixion and burial, see commentary on Matt. 12:40.]

Mar 15:47

**“Mary Magdalene and Mary.”** The women watched Joseph put Jesus in the tomb, close it, and leave, so they saw that Jesus’ body was not properly prepared for burial, which is why they went and bought spices themselves (Mark 16:1). See commentary on Matthew 27:61.

**Mark Chapter 16**

Mar 16:1

**“And when the Sabbath was over.”** In this verse, the “Sabbath” is the special Sabbath (Thursday, Nisan 15; the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). Thus Mark 16:1 is saying that the special Sabbath was over and the next day, Friday, Nisan 16 had begun.

When Mark 16:1 says the “Sabbath” was passed, it is talking about the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was always a special Sabbath, no matter what day of the week it fell on (Lev. 23:4-7, Num. 28:16-18). That is why John 19:31 speaks of the first day of Unleavened Bread as a “High Day” or special Sabbath. The Passover Lamb was sacrificed on Nisan 14 in the early evening, and that day at sunset, Nisan 15 started, which was a “special” Sabbath, not the regular weekly Sabbath (we must keep in mind that Jewish days start at sunset).

The women had seen Joseph of Arimathea put Jesus in the tomb without properly preparing his body (Luke 23:55; cf. Matt. 27:60-61; Mark 15:45-47), so now, on Friday, Nisan 16, they went to the market and bought and prepared spices. It is important to see the time break between Mark 15:47 when the women watched Joseph of Arimathea, and Mark 16:1, when they went and bought spices. The women had seen that Joseph of Arimathea did not bury Jesus properly, but they did not have time Wednesday night before the start of the special Sabbath that began the Feast of Unleavened Bread to buy the spices because that Sabbath was so close (Luke 23:54). Even if the women had wanted to buy the spices at that time, the stores would have been closed that close to the Sabbath. Furthermore, even if the women found someone who would sell them the spices so close to the Sabbath, they could not prepare them because that would be work on the Sabbath, which was forbidden. So the first opportunity the women had to buy and prepare the spices was Friday. Nevertheless, they could not take them to the tomb at that time because the tomb was sealed and guarded by the Romans (Matt. 27:66). The tomb was guarded for three days: Thursday was day one (this was the special Sabbath that started the Feast of Unleavened Bread); Friday was day two, and Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, was day three. That meant the first day the women could expect to get access to the tomb was Sunday, and so that was when they went to the tomb with the spices (see commentary on Luke 24:1).

That the women bought spices on Friday after the special Sabbath on Thursday, explains why Mark 16:1 says the women bought spices after the Sabbath, but Luke 23:56 makes it clear they had the spices before the Sabbath. The apparent contradiction is solved when we realize the women bought the spices on Friday, which was the day after the special Sabbath on Thursday, but was before the weekly Sabbath on Saturday.

The fact that the women needed time to buy and prepare the spices, which they did on Friday, is one of the reasons that there could not have been a Thursday crucifixion. If Jesus was crucified on Thursday then both Friday and Saturday would have been Sabbaths and the women would not have had time to buy and prepare the spices before getting to the tomb early Sunday morning, and furthermore, there would be no way to reconcile the contradiction that they bought spices both before and after the Sabbath.

[For more on the women and the two Sabbaths, see commentary on Matt. 12:40.]

Mar 16:2

**“And very early on the first day of the week.”** This is Sunday, Nisan 18, and the sun had just risen, although it says it was very early, and Luke 24:1 says it was “early dawn,” that is, when the sun was just up. Mark 16:1 says the women bought spices after the Sabbath (the special Sabbath that was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which fell on Thursday that year). So the women bought the spices on Friday. Now in 16:2, it is Sunday morning just after sunrise and the women are coming to the tomb to properly bury Jesus. They did not know Nicodemus had come and done that already (see commentary on John 19:40). Mary Magdalene had come earlier, while it was still dark, seen the empty tomb, and left (see commentaries on John 20:1 and Matt. 27:61). However, the events of the morning had altered Mary’s plans considerably. She did not expect to find an empty tomb and did not expect to meet the Lord. She left the area before these women arrived there.

These women arrived at the tomb “at early dawn” “when the sun had risen,” so they would have gotten together and prepared to go to the tomb at about the same time that Peter and John had seen the empty tomb with their own eyes (John 20:4-9). Had Peter and John come back to this group of women and reported that the tomb was empty, they would not have taken the spices to the tomb in the first place. Luke starts with “they” and does not mention Mary Magdalene at all. That “they” refers to the group of women apart from Mary Magdalene is clear from the fact these women were carrying the spices. There is not a problem with these women coming to the tomb and not meeting with Mary Magdalene, Peter, or the other disciple on their way back to Bethany. There were many footpaths on the Mount of Olives, and it would have been very easy for the women to take one while Mary, Peter, and the other disciple took another.

Mar 16:5

**“young man.”** The women bringing the spices saw an angel at the entryway of the tomb, but he appeared as a “young man,” so they did not realize he was an angel. It was common for tombs to have several rooms. There often is an opening room that is quite large, often with bench seats cut out of the rock, and this room is referred to as a “weeping chamber.” The weeping chamber has another room, or other rooms, that are attached to it, and these have benches or niches for the dead bodies. For example, the “Garden Tomb” in Jerusalem which many Protestants believe may be the actual tomb of Christ, has an opening room, the “weeping chamber,” and then a second room off of it in which to put the dead body. The women were alarmed when they saw this young man (angel), but he spoke to them and calmed them.

**“alarmed.”** The Greek word is *ekthambeō* (#1568 ἐκθαμβέω, pronounced ek-tham-'beh-oh), and it expresses great emotion; to be alarmed, overwhelmed, astonished, amazed, perplexed. Why was the tomb open? Where was Jesus’ body? How did cloth with spices get in the tomb? And why was a young man sitting alone in the tomb? The women had both a mental and emotional reaction. Mark records more of the emotional reaction: that the women were alarmed by what they were seeing. Luke records more of the women’s mental reaction, that nothing they saw made sense to them. They were perplexed.

Mar 16:6

**“He has been raised.”** The Greek is an aorist passive; “he was raised” or “he has been raised” (see commentary on Luke 24:6).

Mar 16:7

**“Galilee.”** For more about Galilee, see commentary on Matthew 28:7. The mention of Galilee in this verse in Mark actually adds to the evidence that the ending of Mark, Mark 16:9-20, is not original. When the angel and then Jesus tell the women that the disciples will see him in Galilee, the next record in Matthew is indeed in Galilee. In contrast, neither Luke nor John mentions Galilee, and they are the Gospels that have post-resurrection events in Jerusalem, such as Jesus’ meetings with Mary Magdalene, with the men on the road to Emmaus, or with the disciples behind closed doors.

In contrast to the internal consistency of the other three Gospels, Mark says the angels tell the women Jesus will see the disciples in Galilee, but then, according to the verses we believe are added, he appears in Jerusalem to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9); the two men on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12); and to the Eleven (Mark 16:14). This is more evidence that Mark 16:9-20 are not original.

Mar 16:8

This is the last verse in Mark that is part of the original texts. The women were understandably frightened and confused by the angel and by all the mysterious things they were experiencing, such as the open tomb, the missing body of Jesus, the unexplained grave wrappings with spices (the women did not know Nicodemus had wrapped Jesus’ body with spices), and Mary Magdalene being nowhere around (she had come to the tomb earlier and was either going to come back and join them or meet them at the tomb). They did what the angel commanded and hurriedly left the tomb and went to tell the disciples.

The apparent discrepancy between Matthew and Mark can be easily explained. While Matthew says that they were going to tell the disciples, Mark says that they did not say anything to anyone. The key to the apparent discrepancy is understanding that Mark is referring to talking to people that they met on the road. Especially since it was just after Passover season, and the day after a Sabbath, it is likely that the women passed many people on their way to tell the disciples what they had just seen, and it would be customary to do at least a cursory greeting to many of those people. Furthermore, ordinarily, if a group of people saw an angel, they would be so excited that they would tell everyone they met. However, the terrible events involving Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, combined with all the unexplainable things the women saw that morning, combined with the “unbelievable” news that Christ had risen from the dead, caused the women not to tell anyone on the road, but to wait until they got to the disciples. However, Luke 24:9-10 let us know that when the women did tell the disciples what had happened to them and that Jesus was raised, the news seemed so outlandish they did not believe the women.

Mar 16:9

When we look carefully at the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9-20), the evidence shows that they are not part of the original God-breathed text, but were added to the original text of Mark, nevertheless, we have made some commentary notes below because those verses are so well-known. The Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as the Servant of God (see commentary on Mark 1:1), and Jesus’ work as the Servant foretold by the OT prophets ended at his death. He was resurrected as “Lord,” and so it is appropriate that Mark does not portray Jesus in his resurrected state.

Many lines of evidence lead us to conclude that the ending of Mark, which is found in almost every Bible, is not original but is a later addition. The evidence falls into two major categories: external manuscript evidence and internal evidence in the verses themselves. What we will see is that both the manuscript evidence and the internal evidence show that Mark originally ended with verse 8, and that short and abrupt ending fits with the rest of Mark and the scope of Scripture. All these points will be examined below.

The first line of evidence we must examine when considering whether or not the closing 12 verses of Mark are original is the external evidence of the ancient manuscripts. When we do this, what we find is that the Greek manuscripts have four major different endings to Mark.[[96]](#footnote-16865) Obviously, not all four of them can be original, and in fact, the evidence shows that none of the four of them is original. While it is true that the majority of the manuscripts have the traditional ending of Mark, that is for a good reason. After it was added, the subsequent manuscripts included it. It is never the largest number of manuscripts that establishes which reading is original, but rather the date of the manuscripts, the manuscript families that include or exclude a text, and any historical evidence that shows us why a text was added or omitted. Hendriksen sums up the manuscript discussion: “It cannot be denied that ever so many Greek manuscripts do contain these words, but when the manuscript evidence is properly *evaluated* instead of merely *counted*, the balance swings heavily toward the omission of the contested verses.[[97]](#footnote-26028)

In the case of the ending of Mark, not only do the earliest manuscripts of the different textual families not have the ending, but the theologians who lived back then testified that the manuscripts they were using did not have it either. The noted textual scholar Bruce Metzger writes:

The last twelve verses of the commonly received text of Mark are absent from the two oldest Greek manuscripts (a and B), from the Old Latin codex Bobiensis (itk), the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written AD 897 and AD 913). Clement of Alexandria [c. AD 150-215] and Origen [*Origen* Adamantius of Alexandria, Egypt; AD 184-253] show no knowledge of the existence of these verses; furthermore Eusebius [ AD 263-339] and Jerome [ AD 347-420] attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them. The original form of the Eusebian sections (drawn up by Ammonius) makes no provision for numbering sections of the text after 16:8. Not a few manuscripts that contain the passage have scribal notes stating that older Greek copies lack it, and in other witnesses the passage is marked with asterisks or obeli, the conventional signs used by copyists to indicate a spurious addition to a document.[[98]](#footnote-15048)

As was stated above, there are other endings to Mark besides the well-known one that appears in most Bibles. Sometimes the Greek manuscripts that have the traditional long ending also have the most well-known short ending, but this short ending is rarely translated into English Bibles. Since the short ending is not original, and since it is not usually included in our Bibles, it was never assigned a verse number. The Greek manuscripts that do have both the long and short endings usually place the short ending before the longer one, between verses 8 and 9, which is more evidence that both endings were added to Mark. The New American Standard Bible includes the short ending, but puts it at the end of Mark, after verse 20. According to the NASB, the short ending is translated as follows: *And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation*.

The reason that someone would write a “more complete” ending to Mark is clear: it seems to end abruptly. The note in the *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* says it well: “Most scholars believe that this [verse 8] is indeed the point at which the original Gospel probably ended and suggests that the other endings very likely developed during the second century, after the Gospel of Mark was read alongside the other Gospels and appeared, by comparison, to lack a satisfactory conclusion.” Actually, when we understand the purpose of Mark, we will see that its ending at verse 8 is perfectly satisfactory, a point we will make later.

Having examined the external manuscript evidence and seeing that the evidence leads us to conclude the ending of Mark is not original, we now turn to the internal evidence of the passage. The internal evidence is in two broad categories: the grammatical and syntactical evidence, and the evidence of what the verses actually say.

When it comes to the vocabulary, syntax, and grammar of the last 12 verses of Mark, it is beyond the scope of this short work, and beyond the ability of most Bible students, to do a thorough study. That kind of evidence involves complex analysis of Greek vocabulary and grammatical patterns and requires experts who thoroughly understand the Greek language. Thus, we will leave the more complete lexical analysis of the ending of Mark to other scholastic works.

[A few such works which cover the ending of Mark in much more detail are: B. F. Wescott and F. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*, Appendix 1, pp. 29-51; Bratcher and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 506-522; Roger Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*; William Lane, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: *The Gospel of Mark*.]

For the purposes of this study, we will only quote some of the scholars who study the grammar and syntax of the ending verses of Mark, and acknowledge that they testify that it is significantly different from the rest of Mark. For example, the text note in the NET First Edition Bible says of the closing verses of Mark: “Their vocabulary and style are decidedly non-Markan.” William Lane writes: “the form, language, and style of these verses militate against Marcan authorship.”[[99]](#footnote-32467) Even scholars like Lenski, who defends the closing verses of Mark as probably original, admit that the grammar and syntax of the closing verses do differ from the rest of Mark. Thus the evidence of the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the closing verses of Mark is in harmony with the manuscript evidence, which is that the ending of Mark was not written by the same person who wrote the rest of Mark.

The other category of internal evidence that the closing verses of Mark are not original is what the verses say; the information that the verses contain. What we find is that there are statements in the ending verses of Mark that contradict the other Gospels and the scope of Scripture. For example, Mark 16:13 says that the two men (Cleopas and another disciple) who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus went back to Jerusalem and joined the rest of the disciples, but the disciples “did not believe them” when they said Jesus was alive. This contradicts the Gospel of Luke. Luke is the Gospel that has the full account of the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32), and it says that when Cleopas and his friend arrived at Jerusalem, the apostles and disciples were already convinced Jesus was alive. In fact, before Cleopas and his friend could even tell the apostles about seeing the resurrected Lord, the apostles and disciples said, “It is true! The Lord has risen” (Luke 24:34). Only after the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem told Cleopas and his friend that Jesus was alive did the two men get a chance to report their own experience with Jesus, confirming that Jesus was indeed alive. Thus Mark 16:13 and Luke 24:34, 35 blatantly contradict each other, and the best explanation for the contradiction is that Mark 16:13 is not original.

Similarly, Mark 16:14 seems to contradict the other Gospels and is the only verse in which Jesus reproves his disciples when he first appears to them. This conflicts with Luke 24:36, which says that when Jesus appeared to the disciples he said, “Peace be with you.” By the time Jesus appeared to the disciples who were behind closed doors, they were already saying he had been raised, so why would he reprove them? Reproof certainly does not seem to be the tone of Jesus’ communication with the disciples according to Luke 24:36-49 and John 20:19-23. Again, the best explanation of the contradiction is that Mark 16:14 is not original. We should remember that as the orthodox Church developed, the loving Christ of the Gospels became a much more harsh and judgmental Christ (God suffered the same degradation), so a Jesus who would enter and reprove the disciples even though they believed in him and even though he had just said, “Peace be with you,” fits well later in Church history.

Still more evidence that the ending of Mark is not original is the unusual material about picking up snakes and drinking poison. The ordinary experience of Christians who are bitten by snakes or who drink poison is that it does hurt them. It is extraordinary and miraculous when it does not. However, as the Church developed, mystical statements and beliefs became more common. Two more good examples of mystical beliefs that developed in the Church are the belief that sex made a person less spiritual, which led to the celibate clergy of the Roman Catholic Church; and also the belief that the communion bread actually became the body of Christ, rather than just symbolized it. The fact that it is not experientially correct that a believer can be bitten by a snake or drink poison without being harmed, and it is also out of harmony with the general wisdom that is taught in Scripture, the material about snakes and poison can be seen to be an addition to the text.

The phrase about speaking in tongues also clearly seems to be an addition to the text. Jesus would have never mentioned that to his followers just before his ascension. They would not have understood what he was saying. But we can see why it would have been added by a scribe as the Church developed because speaking in tongues was part of the early Church.

Still more evidence that the ending of Mark is an addition is that it has an event that is out of chronological order. Sometimes a Gospel will have an event that is out of chronological order, that is true, but in the record of events after the death of Christ, Mark is the only Gospel that has any event out of order. While that in itself would not be conclusive, given all the other evidence that the last verses in Mark were added, the out-of-order verse in Mark is simply more evidence that the verses are not original. Mark 16:9 about Mary Magdalene chronologically comes before Mark 16:2. It is almost as if the person who wrote the ending of Mark wanted to reintroduce us to Mary Magdalene even though he ends up bringing her into the record at the wrong time.

Also, Mark is the only Gospel that mentions anything that happens after the Day of Pentecost. Matthew ends with Jesus talking to the disciples before his ascension; Luke ends with the disciples waiting in the Temple before the Day of Pentecost; and John ends with Jesus speaking with Peter, and then a conclusion about Jesus’ works. In contrast, the traditional ending of Mark has information about the expansion of the Church and the Word being preached “everywhere,” which occurred many years after the Day of Pentecost.

When we remove the last 12 verses of Mark, and simply end Mark as the oldest manuscripts do, with verse 8, we have a very abrupt ending. Scholars are divided into several broad camps about the abrupt ending of Mark. Many assert that Mark simply ended at verse 8; some scholars think there was an ending to Mark that is now lost; and some scholars think that Mark was in the process of writing an ending but was interrupted by persecution or death and thus did not finish his Gospel.

Although we can see why people want a “better conclusion” to Mark than 16:8 seems to be, as we have seen, the evidence is that Mark ends with verse 8. There is no actual evidence that there ever was another ending that is now “missing.” Mark is like the book of Jonah, which ends in an abrupt manner. Both Jonah and Mark leave us wanting a “better ending,” but when we think about it, there are many things in the Bible we would like to have more information about. Some scholars have tried to say that Mark cannot end with verse 8 because the Greek syntax would then be unusual, but arguments such as those have been ably answered. (One person who does a good job answering that kind of argument is Ned B. Stonehouse.)[[100]](#footnote-14162)

It has also been asserted that Mark 16:8 cannot be the ending of Mark because it makes the women become disobedient to the angel’s command to go and tell the disciples. But it is speaking about the women as they left the tomb, and should not be extrapolated and made to imply that the women did not go tell the other disciples.

Since the manuscript evidence, the grammatical and syntactical evidence, and the internal evidence from the verses themselves, all point to the fact that the Gospel of Mark does end with verse 8, is there evidence of God’s design in that abrupt ending? Yes, there is. The abrupt ending of Mark fits with the subject of Mark, and it also parallels the beginning of Mark. Mark portrays Jesus as the Servant of God (see commentary on Mark 1:1). The Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus being baptized and starting his work as the Servant of God. There is no genealogy like Matthew and Luke have, no explanation of how Jesus was the plan of God, the *logos* becoming flesh, like John has. There are no accounts of his childhood as in Matthew and Luke, or introduction of his person, as in John (“Look!, the Lamb of God”). A good servant needs neither genealogy nor introduction; he is qualified by his obedience and the quality of his work.

Mark starts with Jesus getting immediately to his work. By the end of chapter 1 (45 verses), he has been baptized by John; tempted for 40 days in the desert; preached the Good News of the Kingdom; called some apostles; delivered people from demons; healed people of diseases; showed his devotion to God by getting alone and praying; and healed a man of leprosy, which was both a disease and an Old Testament type for sin, thus showing his authority over sin and his ability to heal both the body and soul. In contrast to the fast Servant-start of Mark, after the first 45 verses of Matthew, Jesus was still a baby; after the first 45 verses of Luke, Mary was still pregnant with Jesus; and after the first 45 verses of John, John the Baptist had pointed out that Jesus was the Lamb of God and Jesus had asked some men to follow him.

When Jesus gave up his life for mankind, that ended his ministry as the Servant of God. In his resurrected body he was no longer the suffering Servant foretold in the Old Testament, but had become the resurrected Lord. That is not to say that Jesus no longer serves God and people, for he certainly does, but he serves in his capacity as Lord.

Not nearly enough work has been done comparing the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah as God’s “Servant” to Mark’s picture of Jesus Christ as that Servant. Part of the reason for that is the doctrine of the Trinity, which sees Christ as “eternal God of eternal God,” and never really recognizes Jesus Christ as the truly human servant of God. Zechariah 3:8 foretells that the “Branch” will be a servant, but the whole chapter of Zechariah 3 is typological of Jesus Christ, right down to the name of the High Priest, which is “Joshua,” the Hebrew name for Jesus.

Similarly, the four “servant songs” of Isaiah, the four well-known and specific prophecies of the Messiah as the Servant of God, are certainly fulfilled by the Servant-Messiah that Mark portrays (Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). According to the prophecies, the Servant receives holy spirit; he does not raise his voice or cry out in the streets; he takes care of the bruised reeds and smoldering wicks (i.e., the weak and infirm); he is upheld by Yahweh; he gives sight to the blind and releases the captives from their prisons; he is a light to the nations; he gives his back to those who strike him; he does not hide his face from spitting and humiliation; his appearance is marred; he is a man of sorrows; he bears the sin of us all; and he is “cut off out of the land of the living.” That is a lot for any servant to bear, but Jesus knew it was coming (It is written!), and obeyed God to the end—his death on the cross.

Since Jesus completed his role of the “Servant” when he died, and in any resurrection appearance would no longer be in that role, it is appropriate that Mark ends with Jesus dying and being buried, then the announcement by the angel that he had risen from the dead and the traumatic effect that announcement had on the women. The Resurrection was not a carefully conceived plot by the disciples to deceive mankind, it was God Almighty breaking into history in a way that no one expected; an awesome and profound way that was both shocking and baffling. God showed His love for mankind by raising His Son from the dead and providing a way for all people to have everlasting life.

The commentary on Mark by David Smith also makes a good point. He says, “This ‘ending without an ending’ forces all readers to evaluate what they would do in a similar situation.”[[101]](#footnote-25132) The very abruptness of the ending of Mark causes us to think about what happened. Like the women at the tomb, we have good evidence that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Will we believe it?

**“after he rose, early on the first day of the week.”** We believe this verse is not part of the original text [See commentary on Mark 16:9 above]. Despite that fact, we have translated the Greek text of the ending of Mark because it is so well-known. We believe the translation in the REV is the accurate way to translate the Greek because Jesus was raised from the dead Saturday evening before sunset.

Some versions of the Bible translate the verse as if the Greek text read: “When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene,…” (NIV). Translating the Greek that way makes Jesus get up early Sunday morning, which is why many commentators say Jesus got up when there was an earthquake and an angel rolled the stone away from the tomb door. We know that Jesus was “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40, so he could not have been raised Sunday morning, especially if, as tradition says, he was buried Friday evening. Many commentators assert that biblically, any part of a day is called a “day,” so they say Friday is day one, Saturday is day two, and Sunday is day three. While that way to count days would work if Jesus had just said he would be buried “three days,” it is not a proper understanding of how to count Jesus’ words, “three days and three nights.” There are not three days and three nights from Friday just before sunset to Sunday while it is still dark. We can reconstruct the chronology very accurately from the information in the New Testament. Wednesday was Nisan 14, the day the Passover Lamb was killed, and thus the day Jesus died. Thursday was Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, always a Special Sabbath. Friday, Nisan 16 fell between the Special Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath. Saturday, Nisan 17 was the weekly Sabbath, and Jesus was in the ground three days and three nights just before the sunset on Saturday, so his resurrection was on Saturday evening. Sunday, Nisan 18 was the first day of the week, and the day he appeared to Mary Magdalene and the rest of the apostles and disciples.

The confusion about the burial of Jesus is due to the fact that the Bible makes it clear that Jesus was buried before the Sabbath. Not realizing that the “Sabbath” was a High Day, a Special Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31), people assume Jesus must have been crucified on a Friday, and that is how the traditional account of the crucifixion got started.

When trying to translate and punctuate Mark 16:9, the Greek quite literally reads, “Having risen early on the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...” The question is whether the words, “early on the first of the week” refer to when he arose or when he appeared. The fact is that in the Greek text, it could be either; so we need to discover the meaning from the scope of Scripture. One of the most, or perhaps the most, capable Greek grammarians in modern times is A. T. Robertson, who says, “It is probable that this note of time goes with ‘risen’ (αναστας), though it makes good sense with ‘appeared’ (εφανη).”[[102]](#footnote-21257) There are cases in the NT where time phrases are unclear, so this is not solid proof that this verse is not original, however, if someone were to press the fact that the natural reading of the Greek made the resurrection on Sunday morning, then this verse would be one more piece of evidence that it was not part of the original text of Mark.

Mar 16:10

**“mourning and crying.”** Although it is likely that the disciples did mourn and weep, this seems to be more evidence that the end of Mark is fanciful and not original. No other Gospel mentions the disciples gathered mourning and weeping. Although they certainly missed Jesus, and were afraid and confused, they were caught up in the confusion about his death in light of the fact that they had been so sure he was the Messiah. The mourning and weeping are more like imagery from a later time, as if the disciples were saying, “They killed the Messiah.” Actually, they were saying, “They killed Jesus, who we thought was the Messiah, and now what are we going to do?”

Mar 16:14

**“And afterward he appeared...and he rebuked them…”** This verse contradicts Luke 24:34 because when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, they were already saying he had been raised, so why would he reprove them? The disciples did not believe the women, that is true, but in the biblical culture, the testimony of women was not allowable in court. The disciples did believe Peter and the two men on the road to Emmaus, so Jesus would not reprove the disciples for “not believing those who saw him after he was raised.” They did believe the three men whose testimony was credible in that culture. Furthermore, reproof certainly does not seem to be the tone of Jesus’ communication with the disciples according to Luke 24:36-49 and John 20:19-23. The best explanation is that the closing section of Mark is not original.

[For more information on Mark 16:9-20 not being original, see commentary on Mark 16:9.]

Mar 16:16

**“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”** Mark 16:16 is the only verse in the New Testament that clearly says a person has to be baptized to be saved. Although some people say verses such as Acts 2:38, “repent and be baptized,” say the same thing, that is not actually the case. Acts 2:38 is simply saying if a person did repent and get baptized he would receive the holy spirit, which is true, but different from saying one had to do those things to get the holy spirit.

Salvation is the most serious subject in the Bible, and thus this verse requires our attention. However, studying it in light of the scope of the New Testament, it seems unreasonable that water baptism is necessary for salvation, but it is only mentioned here and not in any of the other clear verses about salvation. For example, Romans 10:9 says very clearly: “because if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you will be saved.” That fact, along with all the evidence that the closing section of Mark is not original, is very solid evidence that this verse is not original, but was added, and that makes sense because as Christianity developed in the decades after Christ’s ascension, the doctrine that water baptism was necessary for salvation became a part of Church doctrine, even though it had never been a doctrine before then.

If someone did want to insist that Mark 16:16 is original and a person had to be “baptized” to be saved, then the “baptism” in the verse would not refer to baptism in water but to baptism in holy spirit. In that case, the statement “Whoever believes and is baptized [in holy spirit] will be saved” would be true, because at the time a person believes, he is baptized in holy spirit, and then his salvation is assured. See commentary on Mark 16:9.

Mar 16:17

**“And these signs will accompany those who believe.”** This verse was almost certainly added to Mark from a later time when speaking in tongues was better known and understood (see commentary on Mark 16:9).

**“speak in new tongues.”** For an explanation of speaking in tongues, see commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:5.

Mar 16:20

**“They went out and proclaimed *the good news* everywhere.”** This verse is more evidence that the ending of Mark is not original. The other Gospels all end before the Day of Pentecost and the start of the Christian Church. However, this verse clearly ends later in Church history. Hendriksen writes that this verse is “a statement which one would naturally associate with a period of Church history considerably later than Pentecost.”[[103]](#footnote-28137) The actual fact is that, for years after the ascension, the Jews did not catch the vision of the Great Commission as this verse seems to imply.

First and foremost, the Jews did not really start to even minister to the Gentiles until the middle of Acts. Although Peter was told to go to the house of the Gentile soldier Cornelius in Acts 10, there is no record of Jews pointedly going to the Gentiles until Acts 11:20 when Jews talked to the Gentiles in Antioch of Syria. As importantly, the Jews took a long time to go “everywhere.” The apostles stayed in Jerusalem and outreach much beyond that was very slow at first. Although a few of the Jews who came to the feasts at Jerusalem may have believed and taken that belief home with them, one of the first major outreach events occurred when Saul was persecuting the Church and “those who had been scattered [by the persecution] went around telling the good news” (Acts 8:4). Thus, Mark 16:20 is more like a summary verse of Acts than a conclusion of the Gospel of Mark.

1. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, intro to Mark. [↑](#footnote-ref-25736)
2. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark*, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-24358)
3. Roger Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20936)
4. Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-23492)
5. Vergilius Ferm, *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-25287)
6. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “βαπτίζω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17585)
7. Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *ISBE*, s.v. “Baptism,” 419. [↑](#footnote-ref-20855)
8. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-16923)
9. C. S. Mann, *Mark* [AB], 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-13079)
10. F. Grant, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, 7:649. [↑](#footnote-ref-20183)
11. Wessel, *Mark*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-31888)
12. Nyland, *The Source New Testament*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-26746)
13. Williams, *The New Testament in the Language of the People*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20367)
14. Philips, *The New Testament in Modern English*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23627)
15. Cf. Wuest, *Word Studies: Mark in the Greek New Testament*, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-25503)
16. Nyland, *The Source NT*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-30764)
17. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark*, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-11898)
18. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-21012)
19. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7* [ICC], notes on Matt. 3:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-18348)
20. See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “Σατανᾶς,” 570. [↑](#footnote-ref-16640)
21. Bauer, BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ἀπόλλυμι.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26929)
22. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιτιμάω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13427)
23. Cf. Bullinger, BDAG, Thayer, and Vine. [↑](#footnote-ref-12761)
24. Guelich, *Mark 1:1-8:26* [WBC], 57; cf. Ann Nyland, *The Source New Testament*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18900)
25. Boyd, *God at War*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-28982)
26. Boyd, *God at War*, 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-28894)
27. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, s.v. “ἐπιτιμάω,” 2:626. [↑](#footnote-ref-13360)
28. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “φιμόω,” 672. [↑](#footnote-ref-30910)
29. Nyland, *The Source NT*, 57n1, footnote on Matt. 22:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-24468)
30. BDAG and Thayer, s.v.“ ἅπτομαι.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17945)
31. See Robert Guelich, *Mark 1:1-8:26* [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-29502)
32. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-18092)
33. R. T. France [NIGTC]; R. Guelich [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-24087)
34. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. “θλίβω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27699)
35. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “δέω,” 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-30767)
36. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 267, “polyptoton.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22288)
37. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-25050)
38. Strauss, *Mark* [ZECNT], 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-28931)
39. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* [NIGTC], 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-26536)
40. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, s.v. “ἐπιτιμάω,” 2:626. [↑](#footnote-ref-24411)
41. BDAG, s.v. “σιωπάω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14651)
42. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “φιμόω,” 672; cf. A. Nyland, *The Source NT*, 57n1, footnote on Matt. 22:12,“Be bound!” [↑](#footnote-ref-16354)
43. BDAG, s.v. “ὁρκίζω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11838)
44. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-11680)
45. See BDAG, s.v. *ξηραίνω.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16521)
46. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 267, “polyptoton.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23838)
47. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-13347)
48. Cf. Brown and Comfort Interlinear; Lenski. [↑](#footnote-ref-31625)
49. Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-10249)
50. Thayer, s.v. “βαπτίζω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18190)
51. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 93-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-28100)
52. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-24421)
53. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* [WBC], 395. [↑](#footnote-ref-14828)
54. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.2.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-13081)
55. Also see Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* [WBC], 428. [↑](#footnote-ref-16130)
56. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-25903)
57. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Mark*, 340n391. [↑](#footnote-ref-18683)
58. Cf. Kenneth S. Wuest, *New Testament*, “out from amongst the dead,” 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-28077)
59. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 362; NASB. [↑](#footnote-ref-21758)
60. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 378. [↑](#footnote-ref-27984)
61. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-18596)
62. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-26215)
63. Quoted by William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* [NICNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-12061)
64. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-18473)
65. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-31500)
66. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 407. [↑](#footnote-ref-13546)
67. W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, Chap. 26, “Kersa-Tiberias,” 381-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-25471)
68. BDAG, 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-13158)
69. See, Roger Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*. [↑](#footnote-ref-32377)
70. BDAG. [↑](#footnote-ref-17829)
71. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 485. [↑](#footnote-ref-18008)
72. Nyland, *The Source New Testament*, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-11061)
73. Cf. Nyland, *The Source New Testament*, 92n6. [↑](#footnote-ref-11935)
74. Nyland, *The Source New Testament*, 92-93n7. [↑](#footnote-ref-27494)
75. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 564. [↑](#footnote-ref-31283)
76. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-19474)
77. Cf. Wuest, *Word Studies*, 1:237. [↑](#footnote-ref-30911)
78. See BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon*; Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14645)
79. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18334)
80. See Robertson, *Grammar*, 330. [↑](#footnote-ref-31635)
81. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 208, “polysyndeton.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25521)
82. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 553. [↑](#footnote-ref-13677)
83. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel* vs. William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* [NICNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-20506)
84. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ⁣¶ 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-13551)
85. BDAG, s.v. “ὑπάγω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31295)
86. Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* [WBC], 782. [↑](#footnote-ref-32556)
87. Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [PNTC], 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-13723)
88. Grant Osborne, *Matthew* [ZECNT], 998. [↑](#footnote-ref-19586)
89. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 675-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-22447)
90. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Mark’s Gospel*, 679. [↑](#footnote-ref-10500)
91. David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-18261)
92. BDAG, s.v.“καί.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13282)
93. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-24385)
94. C. S. Mann, *Mark* [AB], 650. [↑](#footnote-ref-25106)
95. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “ἐκπνέω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29457)
96. Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 122-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-16865)
97. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark*, 684 (emphasis the author’s). [↑](#footnote-ref-26028)
98. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 122-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-15048)
99. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* [NICNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-32467)
100. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ*, 86-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-14162)
101. David Smith, *Mark: A Commentary for Bible Students*. [↑](#footnote-ref-25132)
102. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:403. [↑](#footnote-ref-21257)
103. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark*, 686. [↑](#footnote-ref-28137)