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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

INTRODUCTION.

Though Mark, as the author of the second gospel is called, was not himself an apostle, he was the pupil and companion of two great apostles, Peter and Paul. He was a Jew by birth, Col. 4, 10, and his Jewish name was John, which means "God is gracious." His surname, which he adopted when he became a Christian, was Mark, which means "Mallet," Acts 12, 12.25; 13, 5. 13; 15, 37. He was the son of a woman of Jerusalem who later became a prominent member of the congregation in that city. Her name was Mary, Acts 12, 12-17. It was she who offered her house, at the first critical period in the history of the young congregation, for devotional meetings. It was to her house that Peter went upon his miraculous deliverance from prison, Acts 12, 12-17. It is very probable, from Gospel history, that Mark had had an acquaintance with Jesus even before the great Passion. Many commentators think that he is identical with the young man who, according to his own report, left the linen cloth with which he was clothed on the night of Christ's capture and fled naked from Gethsemane, chapter 14, 51. Mark was especially intimate with Peter, by whom he had been converted, if the usual manner of speaking of this event has been followed in this case, 1 Pet. 5, 13; Acts 12, 12. His intimacy with Barnabas is explained by the fact that he was his cousin, Col. 4, 10. Through Barnabas he came into closer contact with Paul, and he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey as an attendant or assistant. At that time, however, he was not yet firmly established in Christian fortitude, for he left them at Perga, in Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem, much to the displeasure of Paul, Acts 13, 5. 13. For this reason Paul refused to take him on the next journey, while Barnabas was willing to overlook the temporary weakness, Acts 15, 38. There was a sharp contention over the matter at the time, with the result that Paul and Barnabas parted company, Barnabas taking Mark with him to Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas, Acts 15, 36-40. But the estrangement was only temporary, for about ten years afterwards Mark was in Rome as one of Paul's fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God and a comfort in his imprisonment, Col. 4, 10.11; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4, 11. But Mark also assisted Peter in his work, both in Babylon, 1 Pet. 5,13, and in Rome, Rev. 14,8; 16, 19; 17, 5; 18, 10. 21. This is all that the New Testament records of him. From fairly reliable tradition it appears that he afterwards founded the church at Alexandria, in Egypt, where he is supposed to have died as a martyr. In 827 his relics were removed to Venice, where a magnificent church was built in his honor, a worthy monument to the present day.

Even the casual reader of the Gospel of Mark is apt to notice the fact that it was undoubtedly written for Roman Christians that used the Latin language. Quotations from the Old Testament are relatively few, chapter 1, 2. 3; 7, 6.10; 11, 17; 12,19; 14,27, especially as compared with Matthew; Aramaic words and expressions are usually translated, 3, 17; 5,41 ; 7,11.34; 10, 46; 14, 36; 15, 22.34; Jewish customs are explained, 7, 2-5; 12, 42 ; 14, 12 ; 15, 42; there is a frequent use of Latin expressions, like "legion," "centurion," "quadrans," and others.

Mark wrote as the "interpreter" of Peter, as the historian Eusebius has it; it is authentic information concerning Gospel history, which he wrote down accurately. He was the literary editor and publisher of the oral Gospel which he had heard so often out of the mouth of his teacher. The influence of Peter is evident throughout the book in the mention of significant details. We are told that Peter's house was that of Simon and Andrew, 1, 29; these two brothers are mentioned at the beginning of Christ's public

ministry, 1,16; expressions peculiar to Peter occur, 16, 7. 19 (cp. 1 Pet. 3, 22) ; he gives the most detailed account of Peter's denial; 14, 54. 72.

The purpose of Mark's Gospel, as he himself states, is to show the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, 1, 1. This Gospel owed its power and wonderful success to the personality of Jesus Christ, who, by His deeds, His miracles, proved Himself the Son of God with power, 3, 11 ; 5, 7; 15, 39, and brought the kingdom of God, 1, 14; 9, 1; 10, 15. 25; 12, 34. The miracles of Christ are therefore emphasized, the doctrinal discourses being given in brief form only. The distinctive features of the Gospel according to Mark are its pithy, yet comprehensive style, with vivid flashes of portrayal; his characteristic "immediately" or "straightway," which occurs in the Greek text more than forty times; the rapid shifts or quick changes of scene; the fact that the chronological sequence is fair, but not exact. Of the miracles which he relates two are distinctive of his Gospel, that of the healing of the deaf, 7, 31-37, and that of the blind man, whom Jesus healed by slow stages, 8, 22-26. A most interesting feature of the Gospel are the retirements of Jesus, during which He prepared Himself for a new stage in His work as Redeemer, 1, 12; 3, 7 ; 6, 31; 6, 46; 7, 24; 7, 31; 9, 2; 11, 1; 14, 34, principally by devoting Himself to prayer.

The Gospel was probably written at Rome in the last part of the sixties, no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem being made. Whether it was written in the presence and at the suggestion of Peter or not, there can be no doubt as to its authenticity. The unanimous testimony of early Christian history and literature points to Mark as the author. To argue with critics that deny the possibility of miracles and therefore want to doubt the Gospel of Mark, has little value. A Christian knows in faith that miracles are possible, and gives all the more credence to a Gospel account that relates them with all the signs of genuineness. No valid reason has been adduced by any critic to cause us to alter our firm belief that we have, in the Gospel of Mark, the writing of this disciple of the Lord, and therefore the Word of the Lord Himself.

The outline of the book is much like that of Matthew. There is a short introduction concerning the history of John the Baptist. The Messianic work of Christ in Galilee is then given in some detail, with special emphasis upon the miracles. In the last part of the book the Messianic work of the Lord in Judea is spoken of at some length. The book closes with a history of the Passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

MARK CHAPTER 1.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Ministry of John the Baptist. Mark 1, 1-8.

The superscription of the Gospel: V. 1. **The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** It is characteristic of the evangelist's nature, which expresses itself in his style of writing, that he loses no time in preliminary discussions and long introductions. He has a message, the one great message for all men of all times. And it sets the limits and boundaries of the preaching of the divine message for all time. The Gospel, the good news of the salvation of all men, is centered in Jesus Christ, who is its beginning, middle, and end: Jesus, the Redeemer, the Savior; and Christ, the Anointed One of God, our great Prophet, Priest, and King. Both His divine-human person and His miraculous office are placed before our eyes. Only this message is the Gospel, the good news. All other messages, that do not lead to Christ, that do not emanate from Christ, are false messages. That is Mark's emphasis.

John's ministry in agreement with prophetic vision: V.2. **As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.** V.3. **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.** V.4. **John**

did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Two of the prophets of olden times had distinctly described the person and the work of John the Baptist, and the evangelist combines their prophecies for the purpose of brevity. The first prophecy, Mal. 3, 1, is one in which the God of Israel promises to send His personal messenger before the Messiah. And this messenger, by the message which should be imparted to him and which he was to proclaim before the people of the nation, had the purpose, the object, of preparing the way for the Messiah. A thorough preparation of the way was necessary and should be accomplished by the message entrusted to the herald. In the second prophecy, Is. 40, 3, the distinctive contents of the message are given. It is a voice, preaching, which is heard; not a soft, gentle, and obscure whispering as of one not at all sure of his ground, and not filled with the conviction of the divinity of his message, but a loud calling, to awaken sinners from their sleep of security and indifference. A distinguishing feature: It would be heard, not in the midst of the capital or in the halls of the learned of the people, but out in the wilderness, far from the abodes of men. Simple, but impressive its import: Make ready the way of the Lord; make smooth the highway before Him. It is a spiritual coming of which the prophet speaks; it is the heart and mind that must be prepared for the coming of this Lord, who intends to establish His throne in the hearts of the believers. Only the penitent, humble sinners are admitted into this Kingdom. The rocks of self-righteousness, of pride and self-conceit, of a religion of works, will not permit the King to enter into the hearts. These must be removed so thoroughly that not a trace is left behind. That is the sum of the herald's preaching, of his work in preparation for Christ's coming. In fulfilling this prophecy, John the Baptist was out in the wilderness; he appeared out in the arid regions between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, where the hills slope downward to the Jordan; he began his ministry as one that baptized. He made use of this rite, by God's express command, to emphasize still more strongly his preaching. For his was a proclamation of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It was not a mere proselyte baptism, nor was it altogether identical with that of Jesus and the New Testament sacrament. Those that really repented of their sins received remission, forgiveness of their sins, and this remission was sealed unto them by the baptism which was administered unto them by John.

The effect of John's preaching: V. 5. **And there went out unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.** A man with a message such as John's, supplemented by the oddity of his dress and habits, was bound to attract attention anywhere, even where his message was not welcome in its real significance. The inhabitants of the Judean hills heard of the hermit first, and came out of curiosity. But the fame of the wilderness preacher traveled fast, and soon the haughty people of the capital, probably with a deprecatory air, set out over the hills to see this strange man with the stranger message. And the effect of his preaching was truly remarkable. Great masses of people, men and women, crowded to his preaching and to his baptism. It was the custom, at the baptism of proselytes, not to administer the rite until the candidate had affirmed most solemnly that he would renounce all idolatrous worship, all heathenish superstitions, and had promised full and undivided allegiance to the Law of Moses. Here the individual confession of sins preceded baptism. As John himself was sincere, he tolerated no sham and deceit, no mere lip-service. He applied the words of the prophet. Those that were bowed down by the full realization of their sinfulness he cheered by the reference to the free grace of God, to those that were proud and conceited he emphasized the necessity of humility, upon those that were inclined to be deceitful he urged simplicity and purity of heart.

John's appearance and message of Christ: V. 6. **And John was clothed with camel's hair and with a girdle of skins about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;** V.7. **and preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.** V. 8. **I indeed have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.** The appearance of John did much to call attention to his message, especially as the people of Judea were familiar with the description which the Old Testament gives of the great prophet Elijah, 2

Kings 1, 8. His one garment was woven of camel's hair, by no means a stylish and comfortable garment, since he was seeking neither luxury nor easy living. A rough girdle of leather held the garment in place about the loins. His food was in full harmony with his clothing: an edible form of locust, Lev. 11, 22, and the wild honey found in the clefts of rocks or sweated out of certain trees growing in the wilderness. This mode of life he did not merely affect for the sake of making an impression. This was the clothing which he always wore; it was the food which he had always eaten, the customary meal. And now it appears that the message of the prophet, followed by baptism unto forgiveness, was all preparatory to the most characteristic' preaching, that concerning Jesus. He, that one man, that is stronger, that has more power than I, is coming after me, is even now ready to be revealed before you. So great is the difference and contrast between them that John does not even feel himself worthy to perform a service for Him which a slave might covet. He is not worthy to stoop down before this greater Man und unloose the straps of His sandals. That was true, unaffected humility, such as is found in all those that really are serving the Lord. Cp. 1 Tim. 1, 15. The work of this Man that was thus expected could be summarized in a short sentence: He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And this in contrast to the mere baptism with water, which John was sent to do. That is a feature, the most significant part of Christ's ministry and work for mankind, the baptism with, the communication of, the Holy Ghost, John 20, 20. There mat not always be evidence of His presence in extraordinary manifestations, as in the early days of the Church, but the Holy Spirit lives, by the gift of Christ, in the hearts of all that have come to faith. And the evidence of His presence is never entirely wanting, if the Christian but make diligent use of the means of grace, through which alone the Spirit is communicated to them at the present time, especially the Word of the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. There will be a growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Savior; there will be cheerfulness in the midst of the various distresses and tribulations of these latter days; there will be, above all, the greater willingness to serve Him in His kingdom, in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

The Baptism of Christ and the Beginning of His Ministry. Mark 1, 9-20.

V. 9. And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. V. 10. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; V. 11. and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. "In those days," while John was having such marvelous success with his message and with his baptizing, in the days when the crowds that resorted to him were largest. Note. Jesus does not expect John to look for Him, though He might have expected that of one who, by his own confession, was lower than Himself. The King goes forth to seek the herald. From Nazareth Jesus came: there He had lived with His parents during all those years of preparation, concerning which we have only the most meager accounts, Luke 2, 51. 52. His fellow-citizens in that little mountain town had no idea of the greatness of Him whom they were harboring in their midst, whom they knew only as the carpenter, the son of Joseph. The evangelist adds the geographical note "of Galilee" on account of his Roman readers, who might be unfamiliar with the location of towns in Palestine. The various incidents of the story are omitted by Mark; for his purpose the statement as to the fact of Christ's baptism is sufficient. But the miracle which followed the baptism is important. For when Jesus ascended the bank of the river, as He was leaving the water, there was a manifestation of the Trinity, of which the Christians of all times should know. Jesus had just set foot upon dry ground, when the heavens were cleft open above Him, as though cut apart by a knife. This Jesus saw distinctly; it was a revelation for His benefit. He, who had just received baptism unto the remission of sins, not for His own, but for those of the world that were resting upon Him, was shown the open heaven. It was a manifestation to strengthen Him at the beginning of His ministry, in which He must work out the redemption of mankind. This was further emphasized by the fact that the Holy Spirit, coming down out of the open heavens, descended not merely upon Him, but literally into Him. He was here, in the truest sense of the term, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with power. God, His

God, here anointed Him with the oil of gladness, above His fellows, Ps. 45, 7; Heb. 1, 9. Therefore the Spirit abode in Jesus, filled His heart and mind, made Him ready, according to His human nature, to perform the work for which He had been born into the world. Here Christ really began to be Christ, as Luther remarks. And His weak human nature needed the assistance of the Spirit. The works peculiar to the redemption of the world were of a nature which no mere man could hope to perform. In the same way there was also a definite reason for the assuring words from heaven when the Father called down: Thou art My beloved Son. The prophet like unto Moses, out of the people of Israel, was about to take up His life-work. But this prophet was, at the same time, the Son of the Most High, beloved of His heavenly Father, who took pleasure in Him, who here publicly declared His complete approval of the work undertaken by Jesus. It was an assurance which stood the Savior in good stead more than once in the course of His ministry and His Passion. Note also: John the Baptist saw and heard all these occurrences as well as Jesus Himself, John 1, 32-34. He was a witness for the sake of himself and for the sake of his further message to the people. It is a matter of great consolation to us to know that the Triune God, and all the persons of the Godhead, has a definite share in our salvation, that Jesus entered upon His ministry with the approval and cooperation of the Spirit and the Father.

The temptation: V. 12. **And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.** V. 13. **And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was , with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.** "Immediately," not a mere introductory word here as so often in Mark's Gospel, but emphasizing quick action. Christ was now formally installed and prepared for His work; He must enter upon it at once. Mark well: the Spirit drove Him: into the wilderness. It is a stronger word than that used by the other evangelists, Matt. 4, 1; Luke 4, 1. Christ was a true human being. He had some idea of the severity of the trial that awaited Him, and He very naturally hung back; the flesh was weak. But the Spirit, by gentle insistence, urged Him onward. It was a hard fight which He must undergo, but it was a part of His office. For forty days He was out there in the mountainous wilderness; for forty days He withstood the unceasing attacks of Satan, for the incidents narrated by Matthew and Luke are only outstanding features of the temptation. To destroy the works of the devil He had come into the world, 1 John 3, 8, and to destroy the works of the devil He must begin at the very outset of His official work. An impressive picture: The Son of God, according to His human nature, surrounded by the majesty of the desert hills, with no living being to keep him company but the wild beasts whose haunts He had invaded, attacked in every possible way, in every conceivable manner, by Satan, who endeavors, with all his devilish power and cunning, to hinder the work of redemption. But the Savior conquered, He routed the devil. And the Victor received the ministrations of the angels, the good spirits, who came to Him after the battle, whose service refreshed Him according to both body and soul. It was a spiritual crisis through which Jesus here passed while He resisted the temptation, both fierce and protracted. It is more than probable that the terrific strain of those days of ceaseless vigilance left Him as exhausted as in Gethsemane. When it was necessary for an angel to come and strengthen Him.

The beginning of Christ's preaching: V.14. **Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God,** V. 15. **and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel.** The narrative moves forward very rapidly, since the evangelist merely sketches the early days of Christ's official work. He omits the visit to Samaria, the journey to Galilee, and the return to Judea. Jesus purposely waited with a more public demonstration of His powers until John the Baptist was no longer engaged in His preparatory labors. With John's being placed into prison his career was practically ended, though some of his disciples continued to adhere to him. Now Christ journeyed into Galilee and came forth openly with His message. This was due partly to the fact that even at this early date the Pharisees of Judea were planning to remove Him, John 4, 1, and partly to the prophecy to which Matthew refers at this point, Matt. 4, 14-16. His work, His constant occupation at this time, was preaching the Gospel of God, the

good news of which God is the Author, which God had made possible, and which tells about God and His concern about the entire sinful and fallen mankind. It is the characteristic message of the New Testament. Its summary is: Fulfilled is the time, and near is come the kingdom of God ; repent and believe the Gospel. In and with the coming of Jesus the time which the prophets of old always had in mind was fulfilled, Gal. 4, 4; Eph. 1, 10. For the entire Old Testament points forward to His coming. With His coming also the kingdom of God has come near. His presence, message, and work invite faith in Him, by which all men should become members of His kingdom. For "that is what it means," as Luther says, "to be in the kingdom of heaven, if I am a living member of Christianity, and not only hear the Gospel, but also believe. If this were not so, a man would be in heaven, just as though I would throw a log or block among the Christians, or as the devil is among them." 1) Repentance must necessarily precede faith; for the latter implies the acceptance of the Savior of sinners and therefore also the acknowledgment of sins committed. The sinners, those that know their sinfulness, will then be more than willing to put their trust in the Gospel, whose essence is the forgiveness of sins through the merits of Jesus Christ. It was a message of salvation and glory which Jesus was here proclaiming.

The formal call of the first disciples: V. 16. **Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.** V. 17. **And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.** V. 18. **And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him.** V. 19. **And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.** V. 20. **And straightway He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after Him.** Here is an interesting feature: the prominence given to the call of Peter and his brother. Probably Peter, in the course of his Gospel-teaching, loved to dwell especially upon that fact that the Lord had seen fit to call him as one of the disciples, and thus had honored him far above his deserts. And the Holy Ghost had Mark make a note of it here to bring out all the more strongly the grace and love of Christ. It was at the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus spent a large part of the time while He lived in Capernaum. Jesus was walking along the shore, when He saw two fishermen, both of them sons of one Jonas, busy with the work of their calling, throwing out nets into the sea, casting about, now on the one side of their boat, then again on the other. The call of Jesus is explicit and unmistakable: Follow behind Me, be My disciples. His promise is comprehensive: I will make you to become fishers of men. He did not want to communicate to them by a single miracle, as He might have done, the spiritual gifts necessary for this calling, but He wanted to make them ready for their life-work by a gradual process of training. Fishers of men they were to become; their endeavors should be directed toward the souls of men, to bring them into the net of Christ, to make them members, if possible, of the communion of saints. This call decided both brothers at once. Without the slightest hesitation they left their nets and followed Him. Where the will and call of Jesus is evident at any time, there must be no hesitating, no consulting with flesh and blood: a cheerful, immediate following of Christ is demanded by the obedience of faith. In a similar manner Jesus, having gone a little farther on the shore, saw the two sons of Zebedee, one of whom He also had had in His company before. They were also busy with some work connected with their calling as fishermen, since they were mending nets. At the call of Jesus they proved themselves as willing as the sons of Jonas had been: they left their father in the boat with the hired assistants. They were not needed so badly at home but that they could heed the call of Jesus. So the Lord now had four men that had been pledged to be His regular disciples, and to be trained for the great work of preaching the Gospel throughout the world.

Preaching and Healing in Capernaum. Mark 1, 21-38.

Christ's manner of teaching: V. 21. **And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath-day He entered into the synagog and taught.** V.22. **And they were astonished at His**

doctrine; for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. In Capernaum Jesus had His headquarters, and here also Peter and Andrew now lived. Jesus may have called the four disciples on a Friday and arrived at Capernaum the same evening, before the prescribed Sabbath-rest began. But He lost no time in carrying on His work. On the Sabbath He went into the synagog, and, after the manner of the Jews, was given the right to address the assembly, to give them the explanation of Scriptures, which was usually given by one of the elders of the synagog, the *meamar*, or talk. The impression which He made at once was profound. Here was something utterly unlike the usual cut-and-dried droning about tradition and observance of elders' commandments. Here was a man with a message, with teaching, with a doctrine so unusual, so impressive, that the assembled members of the congregation were almost beside themselves with astonishment and wonder. The feature which at once marked His teaching was His authoritative manner of presenting the matter. He was a teacher that knew how to influence heart and mind; His applications were intelligible, and they went to the root of the matter presented by Him. There was nothing of the dead monotony of the method of the scribes here, although He employed none of the orator's schemes to enhance the effect. Luther says in explanation: "With authority, that is, His preaching was as of one that means it with all seriousness; and what He said had power and lived, as though it had hands and feet." 2)

The man with the unclean spirit: V. 23. **And there was in their synagog a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, V.24. saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. V.25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. V. 26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. V. 27. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. V. 28. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.** By chance, as the average person would say, but as we say, by God's dispensation, there was present in the synagog, on that Sabbath morning, a man with an unclean spirit, possessed with a demon. Spiritually unclean the devil is, and the contact with him or his angels makes filthy before God. He had taken possession of the body of this man, using his members to do his bidding. It was the evil spirit that cried out at the sight of Jesus, affirming that he and Jesus of Nazareth had nothing in common, that he and all the demons belonged to a company which are and always will be at variance with the Son of God. His cry is a cry of fear, lest Christ should see meet to condemn them, to destroy them by chaining them forever in hell. He was conscious of his own spiritual uncleanness as compared with the holiness of Jesus, the Holy One of God. "In the emphatic sense, and thus, according to John 6, 69; Rev. 3, 7, the concealed designation of the Messiah. As the typical Old Testament anointed ones represented the Messiah, so the typical saints, priests, prophets, and kings, Ps. 16, represent the Holy One, in the most exclusive sense." 3) But Jesus soon made His business known by rebuking the demon and bidding him hold his peace and come out of the man. Jesus has absolute authority over all things, over all creatures, not only in heaven and on earth, but also under the earth. He is the Master and Lord also of the evil spirits. And so this demon, forced against his evil will to obey, tried to vent his spite in one last effort to harm the body of his victim. He convulsed him, he threw him into a spasm, into a severe epileptic fit. Then, with a last great, screaming cry, he goes forth from the man. The effect of this miracle, coming immediately after the address which had made such a deep impression, was overwhelming. The people were almost stupefied with astonishment. A questioning-together, a hubbub arose in the school, which shows how deeply they were moved: Who can explain this? Has He a new revelation that enables Him to deliver men from the power of demons? Does He do this by His own authority, in His own power? For we see that He orders the unclean spirits about, and they obey Him without question. The news spread like wildfire, at once, everywhere, in the whole region of Galilee round about. Jesus had here given indisputable evidence that He was indeed the Holy One of God, who had come into the world to

destroy the works of the devil and to deliver all men from the bondage of Satan.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law: V.29. **And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagog, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. V. 30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. V. 31. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.** Mark tells this story with greater attention to detail than Matthew, undoubtedly because Peter had taken note of all the things which concerned him closely. By the word "forthwith" the evangelist calls attention to the miracle. The two brothers, Simon and Andrew, as the text here expressly states, had a house in Capernaum. And to this Christ and His four disciples wended their way. Hardly had they entered the house, when they, the members of the household, especially Simon and Andrew, told him about the severe sickness of Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill with a bad fever, which is apt to sap the strength very rapidly. Jesus, in turn, lost no time in performing His work of sympathy. Going to her couch, He lifted or raised her up by taking hold of her hand. At the same time, He rebuked the fever, Luke 4, 39, and it left her at once. And her full strength was restored to her in a moment, for she was able to arise and serve them all, but especially Him, to whom she owed her recovery. Fevers and grievous diseases of all kinds are an uncanny power, their very mysteriousness often renders them baffling and fearful. But Christ is stronger than all powers of destruction.

Healing of various diseases: V.32. **And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. V. 33. And all the city was gathered together at the door. V.34. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.** Jesus had little chance for rest, once the power was known which people had witnessed in Him. The people waited indeed until the Sabbath was past, for the day came to an end with the setting of the sun. But then they brought to Him, they carried to Him all those that were in a bad way, that were not feeling well, together with such as were troubled with demons. So quickly had His fame spread that practically all the inhabitants of the city had come together and were assembled before the door of the house where He was staying. And they were not disappointed in their trust. No matter what the disease was (and many different forms of sickness were represented in that great multitude), He healed them. And many demons He cast out; by a word of command from Him they had to leave their victims and take their disagreeable presence elsewhere. Note: Christ did not permit the demons to speak, lest they tell the people the truth concerning Him. The Lord desires no testimony from the devil and from all those that are willingly in His service. He wanted to reveal Himself to the people of Galilee in His own way and at His own time.

Jesus retires for rest and strength: V.35. **And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. V. 36. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. V.37. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. V.38. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.** It had been long after sundown, probably as long as twilight lasted, that Jesus had been busy with the sick people. And yet, before the dawn brightened the hills on the eastern shore of Lake Gennesaret, while it was yet night, He arose, left the house, and went out into a desert place. He had doubtless been tired the evening before. And He knew that the future would bring many such days, with excitement and labor from morning till night. He was ready for this work; that was His office for which He had come. But His purpose in seeking a lonely place so early in the morning was to enter into communion with His heavenly Father by prayer, Heb. 5, 7. 8. He needed new strength for further labors and trials, and this He sought and received through prayer. There is no better way of maintaining the spiritual strength and serenity needed in difficult work for the Lord than by constant intercourse with the Lord in His Word and by prayer. Jesus was soon missed at home, and Peter and several others followed the way which they thought Jesus must have taken. The text implies

an earnest, anxious seeking, for this is necessary at all times when Jesus is the object of the search. Having found the Master, they inform Him that all the people were even then searching for Him. To men and women anxious to hear words out of the mouth of Jesus and to see works of glory performed by Him, the early hours of the morning are not too early. But at this time Jesus was not influenced by the message of Peter. He denies the implied petition to return to Capernaum at this time. He wanted to go to other places, and asked them to go along, to village-towns, little, unfortified hamlets. For there He wanted to preach, to proclaim the Word of the Gospel. The healing was a secondary consideration; it was intended merely to confirm the Word. The people of Capernaum should now, for a season, have time and leisure to meditate upon the preaching He had done before them, in order to have the full benefit of its influence.

The Healing of a Leper. Mark 1, 39-45.

The beginning of the Galilean journey: V. 39. **And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.** V. 40. **And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.** V. 41. **And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.** V.42. **And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.** Mark relates the events of the Galilean journey very briefly. Jesus went, He carried out His intention at once, perhaps without returning to Capernaum; the anxiety to perform His work urged Him on. Throughout Galilee, not only in the towns of the hill country of Upper Galilee, but also in the less mountainous districts of Lower Galilee, He went His way. The outstanding feature of the journey was the preaching in the synagogues, which could be done all the more easily, since services were held not only on the Sabbath, but on Mondays and Thursdays as well. He came preaching, He continued proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to all, without respite, without ceasing. "This zealous, affectionate, and persevering diligence of Christ should be copied by all His servants in the ministry: it is not less necessary now than it was then." 4) Wherever people were assembled for services, He was willing and anxious to bring them the message of salvation. It was also on this trip that a leper came to Him. Whether this leper is the same one of whom Matthew speaks, chapter 8, 2, is immaterial. Note the urgency of his behavior: He comes, he begs and pleads, he bows down on his knees before Jesus, and he puts his desire in words. His prayer is a model: If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Here is humility and submission; he leaves all in the hands of Jesus; the Master must know best what is expedient and what is wholesome. Here is also the trust of faith; the man knows, he has the firm conviction that Christ has the power to heal him. To know that Christ is the great Healer for all weaknesses and maladies of body and soul, to put one's trust in Him absolutely for help, but, in the case of bodily infirmities, to leave the time, the means, and the method in His hands, that is the essence of confidence in the Lord. The prayer and the entire bearing of the man impressed Jesus very deeply. Having compassion, He extended His hand, He touched him and said: I will; become clean. That almighty word wrought the miracle, it drove away the sickness that was such a severe burden upon the poor man. Cp. Heb. 2, 17; 4, 15; Acts 4, 30. There was no interval of doubt and uncertainty, the healing was complete at once.

Christ's attempt to avoid unwelcome publicity: V.43. **And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;** V.44. **and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** V. 45. **But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter.** Here is a matter which might seem strange at first glance. Speaking to the former leper in a most severe manner, assuming a threatening aspect, He thrust him away, with the injunction to tell no man about the miracle, but to follow the command of the

Levitical purification strictly, Lev. 13 and 14. The bringing of his sacrifice was to be a witness, a testimony to all men, that he really had been cleansed of his leprosy. The reasons for this behavior of the Lord are evident from the entire story, in comparison with the previous text. The Word of the Gospel which He preached was the most important thing in the eyes of the Lord. People should seek Him for the sake of that Word. Publicity resulting from His healing the sick and cleansing the lepers might bring many that would care nothing for the preaching and thus hinder His Messianic labors. Then also, the Lord wanted to avoid unpleasantness, in case the priest should find out about His healing the leper before the man actually appeared to be adjudged clean. But the man, in the fullness of his joy, disregarded the Lord's command and, by publishing broadcast the fact of his having been healed, really added to the Lord's anxieties and labors. For now people came swarming from all sides, insomuch that Jesus could no longer go into the city, but was obliged to stay out in lonely, desert places, and even there they found Him, coming from all parts of Galilee.

Summary. John's ministry prepared the way for the Lord, who thereupon, after His baptism and the temptation in the wilderness, entered upon His labors in Galilee, called four men to be His disciples, taught in the synagog and cast out an unclean spirit, healed Simon's mother-in-law and many other sick people, made a preaching trip through Galilee, and healed a leper.

MARK CHAPTER 2.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Healing the Palsied Man. Mark 2, 1-12.

The return to Capernaum: V. 1. **And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house.** V. 2. **And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and He preached the Word unto them.** Mark here omits a large part of the gospel-story which the other evangelists relate, in harmony with his purpose to stress the miracles of Jesus and set forth His divine power. Jesus had, in the mean time, completed His first journey through Galilee, and had also been to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Some of Christ's most notable sermons, as the Sermon on the Mount, also belong into this interval. It was after some days, after quite a long while, that Jesus came again to Capernaum. As soon as He had arrived, however, this was heard; the rumor, the report of His having returned was spread. Soon the whole city knew that He was again at home. It was not long, either, before many people gathered, with the extraordinary incidents of some weeks or months ago still fresh in their memory. So eagerly they came flocking that not only was the house filled, but the space round about the door was crowded as well. Even there it was impossible to find any more room for additional visitors, much less on the inside. And He spoke unto them, not in a formal way, in a set speech, but in a more informal talk. It was the Word that He spoke, the Word of the Gospel, the Word of the Lord, that Word which alone is worthy of the name, just as at present the word "Bible," meaning "book," is used for the one and only book, whose contents place it in a class entirely by itself.

The palsied man: V. 3. **And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.** V. 4. **And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.** V. 5. **When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** While Jesus was in the house, and the conditions were such that hardly another person could be wedged in between the crowd, there came men that brought or carried a paralytic man. So severe was the sickness and so great the consequent weakness of the man that he could neither be led nor supported in an upright position. He was lying on a sofa or hammock-like couch, which was carried by four men. It was out of the question to approach Christ, to come anywhere near Him. The crowd

effectually blocked the doorway. But these men were neither dismayed nor baffled. Taking their precious burden up the stairway, which, after the custom of the Jews, led from the ground on the side to the flat roof, they proceeded to uncover the roof above the spot where Jesus was standing, as nearly as they could estimate the location. Here they took off the tiles, making an opening large enough to permit the lowering of the bed with its occupant before the feet of Jesus. There must never be a lack of determination on the part of men that actually want to bring any matter to the attention of Jesus. Away can be found to make known your wants to Him, if there is the persistence of firm faith to show the way. Note: It was this that Jesus looked for as soon as the sick man was placed before Him, the faith of them all, the undoubting trust that He could and would help in this great trouble, since He was the Messiah, who had come to take away sin, with its guilt and with its curse. It should also be remembered: the intercessory groanings of the heart for the trouble of any friend or any person in the world have great power with Christ, when they flow from a heart full of faith in Him. So it proved in this case. For the first assurance of Jesus was that addressed to the sick man: Son, forgiven be thy sins. That was glorious, comforting news. For though the present sickness may not have been caused by any direct fault of the sufferer, yet it is true that sin has caused all the suffering in the world from the beginning. "For if we had remained without sin," as our church-book has it, "death could not have prevailed over us, much less any other affliction." That assurance alone, therefore, benefited the sufferer greatly, since it transmitted to him the continual forgiveness of all his sins through the merits of the Savior.

Christ's defense against the scribes: V. 6. **But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,** V. 7. **Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only!** V. 8. **And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts!** V. 9. **Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk!** V. 10. **But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)** V. 11. **I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.** V. 12. **And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.** The leaders of the Jews had watched developments in Galilee with apprehension for some time. The simple assurance of this new teacher did not meet with their approval, especially since He had not asked for their sanction. And so they had men watching Jesus all the time. In this case there was a large delegation of scribes present, Luke 5, 17. As soon as they heard the word out of the mouth of Jesus concerning forgiveness, their pharisaic suspicions were aroused, and their pharisaic condemnation followed. For fear of the multitude they dared not voice their sentiments, but in their heart they passed judgment unhesitatingly, condemning Jesus for a blasphemer. Their argument sounds reasonable: Who can forgive sins but God only? Every sin is, in the last analysis, a transgression of God's holy commandment and therefore against Him. From God, therefore, we ask forgiveness of our sins, Ps. 25, 18; 32, 5. But two points should be noted: Christ, as the Son of God, as His equal in all divine attributes, can and may forgive sins in His own power; and the announcement of forgiveness implies the redemption, and may now be made by any man. Though the objection was not spoken, yet Jesus, who searches mind and heart, Ps. 139, 2, knew their thoughts perfectly which they had concerning Him. And He replies to the challenge. He puts a question to them which is intended to show them the foolishness of their position: Which is the easier of the two, to heal the spiritual or the bodily infirmity? Matt. 9, 4. 5, to say: Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say: Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk off? The scribes, according to their position, now should have said: The forgiving of sins is the easier, for that cannot be controlled, since its action was strictly in the spiritual plane. But Jesus does not wait for their answer. He wants to give them a practical, indubitable proof and demonstration of the power which He possesses in His position as Son of Man, in His office as the divine-human

Messiah. He forgave the sins of the paralytic in His own power, by His own right and might. And He now, by a simple command, restored the sick man to perfect health and full strength, enabling him not only to get up from his couch with some unsteadiness, but to take up his couch before them all and to depart. It was such a wonderful manifestation that all those present, with the exception of the scribes, were astonished almost to stupefaction, and gave praise to God in the words: In this way we never saw it yet. This miracle and all it implied and presupposed was something new to them. It argued for a power greater than any that they had ever come into contact with.

There is much comfort in these words to this day. The Son of God became man, and by His life, Passion, and death earned perfect forgiveness for the sins of all men. The debt is not simply canceled, but is paid through the merits of Christ. For that reason God no longer has a remembrance of our sins. And therefore the Son of Man may distribute the great treasure, which He has earned, among the children of men. What is more, God has, through Christ, given to men the power on earth to forgive sins. Christ has given to all His disciples, to the entire Christian Church on earth, the peculiar power to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners unto them. Thus we know where and how we may find forgiveness of sins. "Not in heaven, as the Pharisees here suppose.... Guard against that and say: God has placed forgiveness of sins into Holy Baptism, into the Lord's Supper, and into the Word; yea, He has given it into the mouth of every Christian; if he consoles thee and promises thee God's grace through the merit of Christ Jesus, thou shalt receive and believe it, in no other way but as though Christ with His own mouth had given thee the promise, as here to the paralytic." 5)

The Calling of Levi and the Dinner at His House. Mark 2, 13-22.

V. 13. And He went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. V. 14. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him. The encounter with the scribes in no way diminishes the zeal of the Lord for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the performance of all the duties of His office. The crowd willingly fell back as He came forth, and eagerly fell in behind Him as He took His way toward the sea. And again He did His work as the great Teacher of the New Testament. As He then, in the intervals of His teaching, was walking along the great road that led from Capernaum toward the northeast, He passed by the booth of a customs collector, or, as the people were commonly called in Palestine, a publican. Palestine had been a province of the Roman Empire since the year 67 B. C. The Roman officers that had charge of the collection of taxes had this somewhat disagreeable task performed by others, who did it for a consideration. The lowest tax-collectors, especially those engaged in exacting duties and customs, were cordially hated by the people. Now Capernaum was situated on the main caravan road between the West and the East, between the Mediterranean Sea and the city of Damascus. Traffic on this road was very heavy, and the consequent income from tariff was large. For every animal in the caravan a tax had to be paid, and the duty on imports ranged from 2 1/2 to 12 1/2 percent. There was also the disagreeable feature that a mere declaration of values was not considered sufficient. The officers personally unpacked the goods and made their calculations accordingly. No wonder the publicans were not popular, being engaged in such a disagreeable work, and for the Romans, the oppressors of the country, at that. And yet, Jesus stops at the booth of this man Levi, the son of Alphaeus, and bids the publican in charge follow Him. It is more than probable that Levi was already acquainted with Jesus, that he at least knew of Him, having been present, perhaps, at some of His sermons. At any rate, it was an effectual call. The Lord, by His Word, so influenced the heart and mind of this man, that he willingly gave up his work and became a disciple of Christ. And from this day he bore the name Matthew, in accordance with a Jewish custom, by which individuals assumed anew name upon the occasion of some critical occurrence in their lives, like Peter and Paul.

The reception and dinner: **V. 15. And it came to pass that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many**

publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. V. 16. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? V. 17. When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the 'physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Matthew was duly elated and thankful to the Lord, as a newly converted person is apt to be. In his joy he caused an elaborate dinner to be prepared for the Lord and the disciples. Jesus willingly accepted the invitation, because it would afford Him welcome opportunity to come into contact with needy souls. While He was reclining at one of the tables, in the fashion of the Orient, many publicans and sinners crowded in and joined in the meal. They were Levi Matthew's former associates and friends, and he saw nothing strange or incongruous in their appearing at this time. But there were people that were highly indignant about this breach of Jewish custom and etiquette. For the tax collectors and the public sinners were for them in one class, they had been put out of the congregation, out of the synagog, usually for some minor transgression against Jewish tradition. And, being properly shocked, the scribes voiced their disapproval to the disciples, either during the progress of the dinner or when they saw the disciples leave the house. They could not understand how Jesus could possibly eat at the same table with publicans and sinners. But Jesus heard their disapproving remark. He knew that His action would be an offense to these self-righteous hypocrites. And so He reminded them of a proverb which was then in general use: There is no need for the strong to have a doctor, but for the sick. That is true on the spiritual plane as well as on the physical. He that 'is truly well and strong, he that is perfectly righteous and without sin, truly needs no physician, no help for his sins, since he is not conscious of them and cannot be on account of their absence. Such perfect persons are indeed unknown on this earth; but all the greater is the number of them that imagine themselves to be perfect. And believing themselves to be righteous (miserable delusion!), they want nothing of the Savior of sinners, they will not believe that His mission concerns them. And so Christ confines His work to the sinners, to those that feel the weakness, the sickness of their soul, the terrible affliction of sin. By His call into communion with Him and by His dealing with them through the means of grace He gives them the assistance they need, He imputes to them, He gives them, His own righteousness, and thus makes them well in time and in eternity.

A question of fasting: V. 18. **And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? V. 19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. V. 20. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.** The disciples of John, after the rigorousness of their master, were inclined to be very severe in the mortification of their flesh. They may not have done so with the belief that they were meriting much in the sight of God, but the thought of the necessity of such practices was ever present with them. The Pharisees, on the other hand, made their boast of their fasting, Matt. 6, 16; 9, 14; Luke 18, 12. They took a great measure of pride in the fact that they were exceeding the commandment of God in this respect. In addition, they expected others to follow their lead. At this particular time they were fasting. And in carrying out the demands of their self-appointed sanctity, they were kept busy in straightening out the conduct of others instead of attending to their own affairs. They wanted Christ above all to regulate His piety by theirs. And, in doing so, they wanted to hold themselves up as models in order to shine before the people -with their holiness. In this case either the Pharisees, together with the disciples of John, or men that were acting as their representatives, came to Christ. They want to know why the custom of the Pharisees and John's disciples is not followed in the immediate neighborhood of Christ. They speak of the disciples of Christ, but their criticism is directed against Him. The explanation of the Lord is simple. He is the Bridegroom, in whose company the children of

the bridechamber, the best man and his companions, are at the present time, so long as He is in the world. Now they were surely aware of the fact that fasting was commonly looked upon as a sign of bereavement, sorrow, and repentance. It surely would not be right and proper for the disciples, therefore, since they were in the midst of the joys of the marriage-feast, to assume doleful faces as though they had suffered a great and bitter bereavement. That time, indeed, was coming, when the Bridegroom would be taken out of their midst, then they would have reason for showing every manifestation of grief, John 16, 20.

Two parables to emphasize His meaning: V. 21. **No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.**

V. 22. **And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles.**

Here a matter of common experience is applied to the case in hand. To sew a patch of new cloth upon an old garment is not only incongruous, but usually aggravates the trouble and causes a further tear at the seam; And to put new wine, grape juice that is in the process of fermentation, into old wine-skins; may easily become disastrous, since the skin is no longer strong enough to withstand the process going on inside. The old, dead orthodoxy of the Pharisees, their righteousness of works, did not fit with the doctrine of Jesus of the free mercy of God in and through Christ Jesus. He that trusts in his works and then intends to patch this up with a few scraps of the Gospel, he that wants to cover up some vice with Christ's merit, will soon find out that his is a poor comfort. In his heart he is still adhering to the old religion of works, which will drag him down to perdition. And the new wine of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake does not suit the hearts that are still bound up in self-righteousness. If the sweet Gospel of God's grace is preached to proud, self-righteous hearts, it will surely be wasted, for they cannot and will not accept and believe it, and it is a mystery to them how other people can take delight in that old Gospel of free grace. But where the hearts have been renewed, made entirely new by the power of the Word, there the Gospel will find the reception which it ought to have, there the hearts accept the glorious news of their redemption and are prepared for life eternal.

The Lord of the Sabbath. Mark 2, 23-28.

V. 23. **And it came to pass that He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.** V. 24. **And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath-day that which is not lawful?** V. 25. **And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him,** V. 26. **how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?** V. 27. **And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;** V.28. **therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.** The Pharisees did not abate their jealous, hawk-like watch over Jesus and His disciples for one minute. And the Lord, on His part, in no way attempted to escape from them. The lessons which He wished to convey to them would be brought out all the sooner with their vigilant presence ever near. Jesus and His disciples, on a Sabbath, were taking a walk through the fields of grain, which were just about ready for harvest. There were in those days simple, rough footpaths that have existed in Palestine since time immemorial. "If a landowner wished to raise grain in a field through which one of these paths ran, he plowed up to the very edge of the narrow path and put in his seed." 6) It was along one of these paths that the little company of Jesus was strolling, they were making their way slowly. And where the grain had encroached upon the path, the disciples, being hungry, pulled up the stalks. This they continued, as they went, and then rubbed the ears between the hands to extract the kernels, which they ate. Here the Pharisees complained to the Lord about the disciples, although their accusation implied a criticism of the Master for permitting the pulling of the stalks, which they identified with reaping, and the rubbing

of the ears, which they identified with threshing. But Jesus defended His disciples by referring the Pharisees to the example of David, who, in a similar situation, when he and his men were in need, did not hesitate to take the showbread out of the hands of Abiathar, the high priest, and to distribute the cakes among his men, 1 Sam. 21, 6. Ordinarily, only the priests were permitted to eat this bread, Lev. 24, 8. 9, but in a case of necessity, above all, love is the fulfillment of the Law, and no one ever thought of censuring David for his action. Note: Either Ahimelech bore the additional name Abiathar, or father and son officiated together at Nob, in this manner that David received the showbread from Ahimelech with the distinct sanction of Abiathar. The conclusion which Jesus draws from this story is brief and to the point: The Sabbath is given to man, and not man to the Sabbath. The Sabbath, as God intended it for the Jews, was to serve them as a day of rest, but His intention never had been to make them slaves of its observance and to bind them with fetters that would render life unpleasant for them. The Sabbath is thus only a means to an end. And so far as the whole question is concerned, this truth stands for all times. Jesus, as the Son of Man, as the divine-human Lord of all, has the right to abrogate the Old Testament Sabbath if He so chooses. The old injunctions concerning sacrifices, new moons, Sabbaths, etc., were in force till He came. But the body itself is of Christ, Col. 2, 16, 17. The Third Commandment enjoins only so much upon the Christians that they gladly hear and learn the Word of God. He that does this much keeps the Third Commandment in the sense of the New Testament and need not be worried by the Sabbath fanatics of these latter days. 7)

Summary. *Jesus heals a paralytic, calls the publican Levi to be His disciple, gives a short discourse concerning tithing and the difference between the old and the new dispensation, and declares Himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath.*

MARK CHAPTER 3.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Healing the Withered Hand. Mark 3, 1-6.

V. 1. And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. V. 2. And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse Him. V. 3. And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. Again He entered, or, as Luke relates, more exactly, on another Sabbath, Luke 6, 6, on the Sabbath following this one on which He had shown the real meaning of Sabbath and Sabbath-rest. Into a synagogue He went, whether into that of Capernaum or elsewhere, is of no consequence here. But He had a purpose, an object, in mind. For there, in the synagogue, as one of the worshiping congregation, was a man that had the hand, the right hand, withered, as the result of injury by accident or disease. He was deprived entirely of its use. It seems that the man was not here by chance, but had been induced to come by the enemies of Christ, for they were watching very closely whether Jesus would on the Sabbath heal him. Note: Jesus does not permit the apparent hatred of the Pharisees and scribes to keep Him from attending the services of the synagogue after His custom; He went for His own edification. Also, the Pharisees felt that the difference between the teaching of Christ and their own dead traditions was an essential difference, that they would have to change their entire mode of speaking and living if there were to be harmony between them and this new Teacher; and this they refused to do. They had even now determined to find some way of silencing or removing this objectionable speaker of truth. The purpose of their watchfulness in this case was to find some accusation against Him before the government, if possible, before the Church at any rate. Jesus knew their thoughts, even before they spoke them, Matt. 12, 10. His course of action He had determined on at once. The lesson He wanted to teach at this time was to be an impressive one. For that reason He said to the man with the withered hand: Arise toward the center. He wanted him to be standing in the middle, before the entire

congregation, as a fitting object of demonstration.

The healing: V. 4. **And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.** V. 5. **And when He had looked round about them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other.** V. 6. **And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him.** Jesus acted with the greatest patience and kindness. He tried to win His enemies by actual persuasion, by causing them to see the correctness of His position. His question to them is: Is it the right and proper thing, ought people to feel this as their obligation, to do good, to save life, to be of assistance to one's neighbor on the Sabbath? Or can it be possible that anyone should want to advocate the doing of evil, the destroying of life, on that day? The omission of a good deed, the neglect of some act of kindness, is, in fact, equal to actual murder in a case where the personal well-being of the neighbor is concerned. The conscience of every man will tell him that on the Sabbath, as well as on any other day, deeds of mercy are not only permitted, but very distinctly commanded. We should help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need. But the Pharisees here deliberately hardened their hearts. Just because their conscience condemned them before this Teacher, they determined not to give Him the satisfaction of yielding. And so they stubbornly refused to answer. Jesus waited. But when their purpose became increasingly evident, He let His stern gaze wander around in the circle, from one to the other. He was filled with righteous indignation over such unreasonable stubbornness. And, incidentally, He was deeply grieved over the obduracy, the callousness, the blindness of their hearts. Note: The anger of Jesus is always directed against the transgression, against the sin; for the sinners the Lord has only the feeling of deepest sorrow and sympathy. "By a long resistance to the grace and Spirit of God, their hearts had become callous; they were past feeling. By a long opposition to the light of God, they became dark in their understanding, were blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, and thus were past seeing. By a long continuance in the practice of every evil work, they were cut off from all union with God, the Fountain of spiritual life; and, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, they were incapable of any resurrection but through a miraculous power of God." 8) Christ's decision therefore was swiftly carried out. He bade the man stretch forth his hand. And the man obeyed, and his hand was restored to perfect health, so that he could now use it as before. This result of their little scheme angered the Pharisees beyond all semblance of reasonableness. They had enough. Without waiting for further teaching, they left the synagogue. Their minds as to their course were made up. It remained only to find ways and means to carry out their design. It was not so much the fact that their orthodox Sabbath-keeping had received a severe jolt and that, in their opinion, the Sabbath had been broken by the performance of the miracle of healing, but that the miracle brought fame to Jesus, and that they had been unable to answer His simple question without making their own position untenable. It was, then, in brief, nothing but vengeful spite that moved them. And they sought allies and chose the Herodians. This society, with its peculiar ideas regarding the Messianic calling of the family of Herod (cp. Matt. 22,16), might easily be influenced against Christ, if the Pharisees would but point out the growing influence of Jesus over the common people, who might soon be ready to hail Him as the promised Messiah. So these two parties, otherwise not the best of friends, readily agreed in counsel against Jesus, how they might destroy Him. So far hypocrisy and the semblance of piety may drive people that they try to cover the most obvious lack of love and mercy, yea, even mortal hatred and enmity, with pious usages and practices.

Miracles by the Seaside. Mark 3, 7-21.

The withdrawal of Jesus: V. 7. **But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed" Him, and from Judea, V. 8. and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when**

they heard what great things He did, came unto Him. Jesus made use of discretion and prudence. He knew the plans of the Pharisees, and therefore He withdrew from their wiles and persecutions and attacks. With His disciples He went down to the sea; these men are now mentioned as important adherents of Christ, which they were destined to become more and more as time passed. The shore of the lake was Christ's place of retreat; from there He could any time easily remove still farther. And the opposition of the Pharisees had resulted in increasing the prestige of Christ in a manner which they had not anticipated, for now a great multitude, an immense crowd, as the evangelist notes twice, gathered from all sides. There were people from Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, where Jesus was then carrying on the work of His ministry. There were people from exclusive Judea that followed Him. Even haughty Jerusalem was represented, as well as Idumea, the country of the Edomites south and west of the Dead Sea, and Perea, the country on the east side of the Jordan, and the country about Tyre and Sidon, in Phenicia. It was a revival movement which affected the entire country. There was hardly a person of average intelligence in all Palestine and in the surrounding countries that had not heard about the great Prophet and His preaching and healing in Galilee. The fame of His great deeds was still spreading, and the people, in consequence, were flocking to Him.

Miracles of healing: V. 9. **And He spake to His disciples that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him.** V. 10. **For He had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.** V. 11. **And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.** V. 12. **And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.** So great were the crowds that came to the seaside to see Jesus that He was obliged to take precautions. He gave His disciples instructions that they should have a small boat ready at all times, with the oars, sails, and the necessary provisions in place, that He might use it at once, should necessity so demand. This was rendered unavoidable by the mass of people, for they rushed upon Him in their impetuosity and might have borne Him down. At the same time, His Savior's love urged Him to perform many miracles of healing, as they pressed upon Him, if only to touch Him. And the Lord permitted it in many cases that the mere touching of His garment or of His person brought healing, for they must realize that the power lay not in the clothing, but in the man. The word here used for sicknesses is very expressive, "scourge." Diseases are therefore scourges of God, either in the form of a punishment, or in the form of a merciful chastening, inflicted by God or permitted by Him for the purpose of drawing men nearer to Him. And one of the worst scourges was the possession by demons, for also such poor unfortunate people as were afflicted with this terrible ailment were brought to the Lord. Invariably these people, when they caught sight of Him, or when they had looked at Him closely, fell down before Him at the urging of the demon in them, who must needs recognize in Christ the Lord of all, and cried out a confession of His divinity: Thou art the Son of God. But that was not the confession that the Savior sought; He wants no praise out of the mouth of Satan and his angels. He did not want to be revealed, did not want to be made known by them as the Messiah. Testimony from the enemies may have its value, but Jesus wanted the people to accept His Word and come to the knowledge of Him as the promised Redeemer through His Gospel.

The call of the Twelve: V. 13. **And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him.** V. 14. **And He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach,** V. 15. **and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.** V. 16. **And Simon He surnamed Peter;** V. 17. **and James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder;** v. 18. **and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,** V. 19. **and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him. And they went into an house.** In the neighborhood of the sea, where Jesus had been performing the miracles, there was a mountain, later simply known among the apostles by this name; in a lonely region. Jesus managed to dismiss the multitudes for a time, since He was anxious to perform a

very necessary piece of work, namely, the gaining of assistants and successors in His prophetic labors. On this hill they would be undisturbed, and He would have leisure to give them the information concerning the call given them at this time. He called to Him those whom He wanted; He made a deliberate selection or choice from the total number of those that had gathered about Him as His disciples. And as He told them off, they came to Him in a place apart from the others. He then literally made twelve apostles, constituting these as a body for themselves. A special ceremony of ordination is not mentioned. It was merely a calling, a separating for special work, that the Lord performed. But as "the Twelve" they were henceforth known. The Lord's charge to them consisted mainly in these points: That they should be with Him, be in His neighborhood at all times, this constant attendance upon His words being necessary for their training; that they should be sent out by Him for the work of heralding or proclaiming the Gospel; that they should, for this purpose, have power, transmitted to them by Jesus, to cast out demons. The power to perform miracles of such an extraordinary kind was necessary to substantiate their claim of a divine mission. The Twelve were thus called, and they received their charge, their appointment. And their names are recorded in order. Jesus surnamed, laid upon, Simon the name Peter, Matt. 16, 18. His nature was uncertain and vacillating, as his denial shows; but by the teaching of Jesus and through His mercy he was afterward strengthened in faith and in trust to become a true rock-man. James was the elder son of Zebedee, the fisherman, the name of the younger son being John. To these the Lord applied the Aramaic name Boanerges, "sons of thunder," on account of their fiery temper in their younger days, Luke 9, 54, 55. Their zeal was later tempered by the Lord's instruction. James became the first martyr of the apostles, and John was known as the "Apostle of Love." These three are mentioned first, because they were the intimate friends of the Lord, being with Him both on the Mount of Transfiguration and also in Gethsemane, not to speak of minor occasions. Andrew was the brother of Peter and one of the first to follow the Lord, John 1, 35-40. A third pair of brothers was Philip of Bethsaida and Bartholomew, who is undoubtedly identical with Nathanael, John 1, 45, 46. Matthew was formerly known as Levi, the publican, the son of Alphaeus, Matt. 10, 3. Thomas was also known as Didymus, the "twin," John 20, 24. Then there was James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, also known as Lebbaeus or Judas Lebbaeus, Acts 1, 13, and Simon of Cana. Last of all is mentioned Judas, the traitor, who was from Keith, and was admitted to the rank of the apostles that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, John 13, 18. Their preliminary charge having been made to them, the Twelve returned to the valley with Jesus, and entered into a house. They were all in need of rest and recreation, the last days having been very strenuous.

The friends of Jesus think Him out of His senses: V. 20. **And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.** V. 21. **And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself.** No sooner had Jesus returned to the city and to the house, no sooner had He come home, than a crowd again assembled. So urgent were they in their demand to see Him that Christ and His disciples were not even given time to partake of the necessary food needed to sustain life. If the eagerness of these people had only been for the Bread of Life, if they had only been hungering and thirsting after righteousness, there would not be a discordant element in the entire story. But their object was more than ever a glimpse of the great Healer and Benefactor; His message interested them little or not at all. In the mean time those nearest to the Lord, His relatives, His mother and His brothers, who are mentioned also at the end of the chapter, were becoming worried about Him. They had heard about the multitudes and their intense insistence upon seeing Jesus and giving Him no rest. So they set out from where they were with the purpose of taking Him under their care; for they had gained the impression, and no longer made any effort to conceal it, that He was in an unhealthy state of excitement, due to overwork, bordering on insanity. This peculiar idea, which was not at all flattering to the Lord, was due to lack of proper knowledge as to His power. Jesus was the Son of God, and He might become tired and weak, but He would not submit to the extent as was supposed by His relatives.

Discourse on the Casting Out of Devils. Mark 3, 22-35.

The pharisaic theory and the defense of Jesus: V. 22. **And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils.** V. 23. **And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?** V. 24. **And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.** V. 25. **And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.** V. 26. **And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.** V. 27. **No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.** The work of Jesus had been characterized especially by the healing of demoniacs, a cure both difficult and pronounced. It was for this reason that the enemies of Jesus took occasion to attack above all these signs of healing. The scribes from Jerusalem they were, both Pharisees and elders, since it became evident that the local rabbis could not cope with the situation. They literally came down from the capital city, for Jerusalem is situated at an elevation of 2,800 feet, while the Sea of Galilee is 620 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The leaders of the Jewish Church were deeply troubled over the fact that this unknown rabbi, who had received neither His instruction nor the sanction for His teaching from them, should have such marvelous success; hence the delegation. An expressive and comprehensive term: they said. They made it their business, continually, and wherever an opportunity presented itself, to influence the people against Jesus. And their most malignant slander was this: He has Beelzebub, or Beelzebub; this prince of the devils gives Him the power to cast out demons. Beelzebub was the name of the patron idol of Ekron, a city of the Philistines. It meant "the god of flies"; but the Israelites changed one consonant, and had it read Beelzebub, "the god of dung," to ridicule the false god. In this way the word gradually came to designate the devil. The intention is plain. The meaning is: If this man were not in league with the devil, if He did not possess His power by authority and gift of the devil, the demons would not obey Him in going forth from the demoniacs. But Jesus has an answer ready to confound them. Knowing their thoughts, He assumes the offensive. He cites them to appear before Him and proposes to them a number of questions. Is it reasonable to suppose that Satan would cast out Satan? Would he be so foolish as to destroy his own kingdom by permitting divisions in the midst of his own armies! Would he permit the members of his own household to be at loggerheads with each other! Satan is far too keen and too prudent to bring harm upon himself and to destroy his own kingdom, for he knows that such a proceeding would signify and foretell the end of his reign. In a positive form, the defense of Christ was: Not by Beelzebub, but by the Spirit of God, I cast out devils. And this Spirit of God that spoke through Him and manifested Himself through Him, bore witness to the heart and minds also of the Pharisees. And yet they blasphemed and exhibited the poison of their heart by labeling the work of God as the work of the devil and hindering the spread of the Gospel. Similar blasphemies occur in the very midst of the so-called Christian Church to this day. The doctrine of Christ, the way of salvation as taught by Him, is blasphemed as a dangerous, harmful doctrine, and those that adhere to it in simple faith are adjudged undesirable neighbors and citizens. But the word of Jesus at this point may still be applied.

Over against the slanderous, blasphemous explanation of the Jews, Jesus now places His simple and true explanation. The devil is strong and mighty, indeed, but in Christ he has found more than his match, he has met Him whom he must acknowledge, without question, as his Master. Christ, the Son of God, has entered into the house of the strong one, Satan; He has taken with Him the spoil which fell to His lot at the time of His great victory. The demons, all the evil angels, had to confess Him and bow before Him as the Son of God; they were obliged to obey, even against their will, for all things have been put under His feet, Eph. 1, 22. By His life, Passion, and death, by His active and passive obedience to His heavenly Father's will Christ has conquered the devil and delivered all men from his power. Thus it is that Christ can now seize the spoils taken from Satan, tear from him his possessions, also those poor people whom he has possessed. This our Lord does even today through the Word, by

which the souls of men are delivered from the power of the devil.

A warning against the unforgivable sin: V. 28. **Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme;** v. 29. **but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:** v. 30. **because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.** With solemn emphasis Jesus gives the Pharisees this warning. Jesus knew that the scribes did not believe their own theory as to His ability to cast out devils. "You are not merely mistaken theorists, you are men in a very perilous moral condition. Beware!" 9) God's mercy is as wide as heaven and earth; His forgiveness actually embraces all sins, even the ordinary blasphemies, wherewith so many people continually offend against Him. But there is one great exception, namely, when the blasphemy is directed against the Holy Ghost. This sin is unpardonable, its guilt lasts forever, it has no forgiveness forever. He that commits it is guilty of a transgression whose consequences will last throughout eternity. This solemn and complete declaration was called forth by the charge of the Jews that Jesus had an unclean spirit. Thus the blasphemy was directed against the Spirit of God that lived in Christ, and hence His warning. If the scribes had been ignorant, or if they had misunderstood the Lord and had been seeking some explanation of His strange power over demons, that would have been a sin against the Son of Man, and therefore pardonable. But they spoke against better knowledge; their charge was a deliberate, malicious blasphemy, and therefore their charge cast mockery upon the Holy Ghost.

The true relatives of the Lord: V. 31. **There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him.** V. 32. **And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee.** V. 33. **And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren?** V. 34. **And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren!** V. 35. **For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.** Jesus had barely finished His discourse directed to the Pharisees, when there came an interruption. We were told that His kinsmen had gotten ready to save Him against the probable loss of His reason, V. 21. They had, in the mean time, reached the house where Jesus was sitting with His disciples, the people, and the scribes. They sent a message to Him, calling Him. They believed that the demands of relationship superseded all other considerations. They had made up their mind to take Him away for a while. The message was gradually transmitted to the Lord while He was still sitting there in the midst of His hearers, for the people sat round about Him, willing enough, for once, to listen to His preaching. But when Jesus received the message, telling that His mother and His brothers (stepbrothers, half-brothers, or cousins) were anxiously looking for Him and wanted Him outside, He gave a characteristic answer. Slowly letting His gaze travel round about in the circle, where His twelve disciples were sitting in the first row, and many others that had learned to believe on Him as near as possible, He called these men (and women) His mother and His brethren, His true relatives. Not that Christ intended to disparage the claims of relationship. He Himself was a model in the obedience and respect toward His mother, Luke 2, 51. 52; John 19, 27. But He wanted no unwarranted interference with His work and office. He desired to repudiate, first of all, the assumption as though He were not quite master of Himself and His actions. And He wanted them to understand, now and always, that the claims of earthly relationship did not dare to interfere with the business in hand, that of carrying out His ministry for the salvation of mankind. Under certain circumstances, it may happen even now, does happen, in fact, very frequently, that a man's enemies are those of his own household, chapter 7, 11-13; Matt. 10, 36. But the will of God may require that the relationship of blood, even the nearest and dearest relationship be denied in fulfilling His will. It may often take a great deal of spiritual knowledge and prudence, and at other times it may require an extraordinary amount of courage and determination, but the will of God in the government and work of His Church must be the paramount issue in all instances. There can be no divided allegiance in this case, Prov. 23, 26; Matt. 10, 37.

Summary. *Jesus heals the man with a withered hand, performs miracles by the seaside, calls the twelve apostles, gives a discourse on the casting out of devils, and teaches wherein true relationship with Him consists.*

MARK CHAPTER 4.
[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Teaching by Means of Parables. Mark 4, 1-34.

V. 1. And He began again to teach by the seaside; and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. V. 2. And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine. Jesus had devoted some time to the private instruction of His disciples, in which He had been interrupted by the dispute with the Pharisees. He now resumed His ministry to the people of Galilee and the others that had come from other parts of Palestine. We have here one of the two chapters in Mark that present a connected discourse of the Lord, chapter 13 being the other. Christ's teaching was, for the most part, done in the open air, at various points along the shore of the sea. Greater crowds than ever assembled about Him, making it necessary for Him to enter into a boat and address the people while seated out there, at some distance from the land. The entire multitude, meanwhile, stood or sat along the shore, which arose from the sea in a gentle slope. Jesus thus had the advantage of having His entire audience before Him so that He could see practically everyone of them, and it was much easier for Him to address them with uplifted head, since the voice carries better. And the people, in turn, were all able to see Him, a condition which is almost a prerequisite for close attention. Mark emphasizes the fact that the Lord's address was teaching, instructing. His purpose was not to keep the crowd amused, but to impart to them the knowledge pertaining to their salvation. This must be the aim of all true Gospel-preaching. The preacher that degrades His church into an amusement-hall and His sermon into a mountebank's foolishness, does not follow in the footsteps of the great teacher. The feature of Christ's teaching was his speaking in parables, in the simple telling of incidents taken from every-day life, but with profound application to spiritual matters. Note: There was never the least of the frivolous or profane in the stories as told by the Lord. His was not the cheap art of the professional exhorter; the matter with which He dealt was far too serious to permit of unseemly levity.

The parable of the fourfold soil: **V. 3. Hearken! Behold, there went out a sower to sow; V. 4. and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. V. 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth; V. 6. but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. V. 7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. V. 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. V. 9. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.** Jesus calls attention to His words, He wants all hearers to listen, very closely, in order not to miss one word of His discourse. For His are not the words of a mere man that often uses words without meaning and connection, but every word is here fraught with heavenly wisdom. This is true of the entire Gospel. Men are inclined to discard the verbal inspiration of the Bible, saying that it is not necessary for a proper understanding of the spiritual truths, and especially of social Christianity. But Christ's ideas in this case, as often, do not agree with the wisdom of this world. Upon a single word, yea, upon a single letter, as Luther says, more depends than on all creation. The parable itself Jesus now introduces with "Behold!" He places, paints a picture before their eyes, one with which they all were familiar. But He wants them to note every detail, for there is a lesson for them there. A farmer at seed-time goes out to sow his seed,

broadcast. The farm-land of the Jews was not divided into sections, but lay for the most part in irregular parcels, and the paths to the various villages and cities, which had been made ages ago, were left just as the present owners had found them. The soil was prepared up to the path on either side, but the path itself remained. And so it could very easily happen that some of the seed fell on the path, all along the way where the people went to and fro. No harrow covered it, nor could it sink into soft soil. And so the birds used it as food. In another part of the field there was a mere veneer of soil over the rock beneath. The seed which fell there could not sink in very deeply before sprouting. The warmth retained in the rock and the moisture of the night all combined in causing it to germinate very rapidly. In a very short time the young plants showed above the ground. But their tiny rootlets which enabled them to rise above the ground were not large and strong enough to supply a more mature plant, and there was no room for them to spread out and grow into deeper soil. The little moisture was soon used up, and when the sun began to beat down upon the unsheltered plot, they drooped, and presently their lack of a sufficient root system had its effect: they died. In still another part of the field the ground had either not been worked well enough to grub out all the thorns and weeds, or some weed-seed had remained from the previous year and welcomed the working of the soil as an opportunity for rank growth. The seed which fell here sprouted, and the plant started to grow, but the weeds had greater vitality, they grew up rank and strong and soon caused the grain to suffocate, so that it could produce no fruit. But still other seed fell on soil that repaid the farmer's work most handsomely: The stems grew up high and strong, the ears of grain were formed long and full, the grain filled the ears in the proper manner, and the harvest proved to be all that the husbandman could desire, for the yield was thirty-, sixty-, and a hundredfold. Again, the Lord emphasized the importance of the lesson which He wished to convey to His hearers by calling out: Whosoever has ears to hear, let him hear. The mere possession of physical ears and the mere outward hearing of the words of Christ's discourse are not sufficient. There are thousands of people that hear the Word in that way and have no benefit from it whatsoever. Christ here calls for a hearing and understanding of the heart, that the real meaning of His words be comprehended and the proper application made by every individual.

The disciples ask for an explanation: V. 10. **And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the Twelve asked of Him the parable.** V. 11. **And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:** V. 12. **that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.** V. 13. **And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how, then, will ye know all parables?** The disciples of the Lord, the Twelve as well as the others that believed on Him and were with Him as much as possible, were still very dense in spiritual understanding. So they took the opportunity, when they were alone with the Lord, to ask Him about the meaning of this parable. He said to them: To you the mystery of the kingdom of God is given. The word "mystery" here, according to New Testament usage, does not mean something hidden and obscure, but something that is and should be revealed. "We usually think of a mystery as something hidden; but in the New Testament it means something revealed. It had been 'kept secret' and was still hidden to the world in general; but this mystery of God's nature and God's will had now been 'made known' (Eph.3, 3; 6, 19)." 11) The disciples, the members of His Church, should fully understand the meaning of the kingdom of God, how Christ, in and with the working of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel, engenders faith in the hearts of men, so that they might know their Savior Jesus Christ, perform truly good works by His power, and finally obtain the everlasting possession of heaven. Of those without, Christ says that He speaks everything to them in parables, and then quotes the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 6, 9, in which it is said of the unbelieving Jews that they see indeed, that they use their eyes, and yet get no picture of that which they see, that they use their ears and yet understand not, that therefore there would not be an opportunity for them to repent and receive remission of their sins. It is one of the severe passages directed against self-

hardening. This word of the prophet found its application in the days of Jesus. The judgment of God against His former people, which had begun in the days of Isaiah, was now being fully accomplished. It became more and more evident that the majority of the people that crowded to Jesus had no thought of seeking salvation in their hearts; they were merely inquisitive, they wanted to see and hear this new Prophet, about whom they had been told so many wonderful things. And so God finally condemns them to remain in their perverse, hardened mind. The Gospel of Christ, preached by Christ Himself, served the terrible purpose of hardening their hearts, it was to them a savor of death unto death. But the disciples also needed an earnest admonition. Their spiritual dullness was a great danger, theirs was the condition of so many Christians that are satisfied with just a little and do not have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. 5, 14. The Word of God is like a mountain full of treasures. The treasures on the outside have been picked over so often that their beauties have been brought down to the plane of mere platitudes with many people; but the searcher after the pure gold will dig and delve and search, and will find ever new veins and occasionally such a rich nugget of purest gold that he stands overawed in the presence of such sublimity.

The explanation of the parable: V. 14. **The sower soweth the Word.** V. 15. **And these are they by the wayside, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the Word that was sown in their hearts.** V. 16. **And these are they likewise which are sown in stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; V. 17. and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.** V. 18. **And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the Word, V. 19. and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.** V. 20. **And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the 'Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.** It is Christ that sows the seed of His Word, even to-day, by the preaching of the Gospel. But the hearers of the Gospel may well be divided into four classes, according to the soil of their heart and the treatment which the Word receives at their hands. These are the chance or occasional hearers, those that forget. They are the wayside men, those in whose case the seed falls along the way. Some of these may even become regular attendants at church. But the seed of the Word remains lying on top of their hearts, it does not penetrate even the crust of their sensibilities. Here, as Christ says, it is Satan himself that takes the Word away from their hearts. The second class are the overenthusiastic hearers, that have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. The Lord here identifies them with the seed rather than with the soil, though both factors act together. They are the rocky-ground men. With a change of pastors, or due to some other cause, they suddenly, all unexpectedly, accept the Word with great joy. Their interest in matters pertaining to the Church is most gratifying. But the soil of their heart is not prepared for a lasting faith. They are influenced by the weather, both literally and figuratively. They mold their Christianity according to the times. As soon as danger signals appear along the horizon, the temperature of their zeal is reduced to a point where it no longer is of any use. Tribulation and persecution they cannot stand; it makes them lose all interest in the Church and her business. The third class of hearers of the Word are rather promising, at first glance. They hear the Word, even diligently and attentively; their intention is to be worthy Christians. But they permit other plants, dangerous weeds and thorns, to rise up in their hearts. The cares and worries of this present time engross their attention more and more. The fallacy of riches, the idea that the mere possession of money will render happy, takes hold of them. And finally, the desire for the other pleasures which the children of the world enjoy with such apparent satisfaction and happiness gradually blinds their hearts to the true values in life. Faith struggles for a while to maintain its position in the heart, but it fights a losing battle, it remains without fruit. But to the last class belong those Christians that have been sown into good soil, where the soil of the heart has been prepared in the proper manner by the thorough plowing

of the Law and by the gentle, merciful rain of the Gospel, where the seed may sprout and grow unhindered, until the full ears speak of the' rich harvest. There is a difference, of course, according to the gifts and opportunities of the individual Christian, some will yield fruit only in comparatively small measure, while others are rich in good works, but the fact of the yield is the same in all these cases. It is a searching sermon that is contained in this parable of the Lord's, and all Christians should take heed to remember the lesson: The seed that did not sprout at all; the seed that sprouted, but did not grow; the seed that sprouted and grew up, but bore no fruit; and finally the seed that came up to the expectations of the Lord.

Responsibilities of the Christians: V. 21. **And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick? V. 22. For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret but that it should come abroad. V. 23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.** There are two reasons why Jesus introduces this thought here which He had also used in the Sermon on the Mount. The knowledge which He here transmitted to His disciples was a part of their equipment as preachers, to be used by them for the benefit of their hearers. Mere general statements as to the will of God and the salvation of mankind may, under circumstances, be very obscure, in fact, unintelligible to the average audience. And therefore such explanation is demanded as will make the meaning plain and bring the fact of God's plan of salvation home to every man. Besides, it is true, in general, that the fruit which God expects in the Christians is such as will make itself felt in the world, as will wield an influence in the every-day affairs in the Christian's neighborhood. The light does not come, it is not brought by the bearer, in order to be placed beneath an inverted bushel-measure or under a sofa, such as were used when reclining at the table, but it should be placed on a candlestick. Then it may give light to all that are in the house, Matt. 5, 15. This Christ emphasizes: That which is now yet hidden, will surely be revealed; that seems to be a definite law; the person that conceals something, does so with the intention of bringing it out of the hiding-place at some future time. "This is universally true. Things are hid because they are precious, but precious things are meant to be used at some time and in some way." 12) It is the same thought that the Lord teaches Matt. 10, 27. The doctrine of the Gospel, the good news of the free justification of all sinners through the merits of Jesus Christ, that is hidden before men, no man knows anything of its beauty or of its comfort, and a great many so-called Christian preachers relegate it to a dismal background. But this mystery shall be revealed before the eyes of all men, both through Bound Gospel-preaching and through Bound Gospel-living. The Lord has a very good reason for adding His warning cry concerning the understanding of His words.

A further warning: V. 24. **And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. V. 25. For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.** Christ here uses some proverbial sayings, quoted by Him elsewhere, in a new connection, Matt. 7, 2; 13, 12. The disciples, and especially the Twelve, were now hearing, being instructed for their work as evangelists, as preachers of the Gospel. Two people may hear the same saying in an entirely different way, with a great difference as to the amount of benefit obtained. It is essential, therefore, that they keep their eyes open and watch what they hear; for careful hearing pays. The reward given to them by Christ will exceed the measure of attention if they are faithful. A Christian that studies his Bible attentively, with the object of finding in it Jesus, the Savior, John 5, 39, will be surprised by the measure of grace and understanding that will be given to him. The pastor and teacher that searches diligently will almost be overwhelmed by the mass of appropriate material that will be at his command. But a Christian that makes no headway in Bible knowledge will find even the little head knowledge that has still remained with him dull and commonplace; the pastor that does not grow in knowledge or the Scriptures will find himself growing shallow in his sermons and dull in his application. It is the judgment of God upon the indifferent and upon the lazy. "Whoso hath attention, knowledge will be

given to him; and from him who hath not the seed of knowledge will be taken. For as diligence causes that seed to grow, negligence destroys it." 13)

The parable of the seed: v. 26. **And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, V. 27. and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. V. 28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. V. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.** Here is another parable, addressed especially to the disciples, and containing an important lesson for them in their future work. If a farmer sows good seed into his fields, all his worrying about the crop will avail him nothing. He will tend to his other work and will follow his usual mode of living: he will go to rest in the evening and get up in the morning. He knows that it rests with God to give the increase. And this is as it should be. For it is God's promise that seed-time and harvest shall not cease. Gen. 8, 22. By the course of nature which God has ordered the seed sprouts, the blade appears, the ear develops, the grain matures. And thus it is in spiritual matters. When a pastor has preached the Word, publicly and from house to house, he has done that work for which he has been called. Worrying about results is as foolish as it is useless. The power of God is in the Word, and it rests with Him to bless the proclamation of the Gospel according to His promise that His Word will not return to Him void, Is. 55, 10. 11. God must give the increase, 1 Cor. 3, 6. 7. Too many pastors, especially young pastors, as it has been put somewhat quaintly, want to turn around and go into the field with the reaper after they have just come out with the drill. When God's time has come, then the harvest may be gathered; He will send His scythe and bring in the ripe sheaves.

Parable of the grain of mustard-seed: V. 30. **And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it? V. 31. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth; V. 32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and cometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.** It is not a matter of indifference, but of anxious concern to the Lord, as it should be to all true teachers of the Word, in what way He can make clear to His disciples the great truths which they must understand and be thoroughly familiar with, for themselves as well as for their hearers. He wants some comparison, some parable that will bring out still more strongly the lesson of the last parable, but in its application to the entire Church. He chooses a mustard-seed for His purpose. The characteristic feature of this seed is its small size, rendering it almost insignificant in comparison with others as it is sown into the ground. The results, however, are little short of marvelous. In the proper soil, and with the right conditions, it will grow up to be the largest of the garden vegetables, becoming almost treelike in its proportions, extending its boughs in every direction, so that the birds will welcome its shade and be glad to use the protection of its branches for a roosting-place. Thus the preaching of the Gospel is considered insignificant before men. It is despised in the sight of those that prefer the philosophy and wisdom of this world. But when it comes to results, to spiritual life and strength, then human wisdom cannot even come into consideration. For the Word of God alone can take hold of a man's heart and renew it entirely, change his entire life and manner of thinking. And the same effect may be observed in the history of the Church. A mere handful of disciples assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem has grown to a body whose size is such as to be known to God only, although even the number of those that profess Christianity is very large. That fact is a source of constant comfort to all believers, whether they be pastors or not: their labor cannot be in vain, since they have the living Word to deal with.

The end of the parables: V. 33. **And with many such parables spake He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it. V. 34. But without a parable spake He not unto them; and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.** The parables here related by Mark were by no

means all that the Lord spoke on that day, whether in the boat or at home. The ones given here are only a few of many. He tried to fit the instruction to the understanding of His hearers, especially that of His disciples, who were strongly in need of teaching. His subject was always the same: He spoke to them the Word, the Gospel of their salvation, He wanted to impress upon them the necessity of entering into the kingdom of God, of accepting the Redeemer, of having faith planted into their hearts. This verse, then, in no way disagrees with v. 12. "Mark says, chapter 4, 33, Christ had spoken in parables to the people that they might understand it, everyone according to his ability; how does this agree with what Matthew says, chapter 13, 13.14: He spoke through parables that they might not understand? This is to be explained thus, that Mark wishes to say: The parables serve this purpose, that unlearned people comprehend the story though they do not get its meaning, and yet may afterwards be taught and then understand them. For the parables naturally please the simple folk, and they remember them easily, since they are taken from the common things, with which they are familiar. But Matthew wants to say that these parables are of a nature that no one can understand them, no matter how often he hears and comprehends the story, unless the Spirit makes them evident and reveals them. Not that they should be preached for the purpose of not being understood; but that it naturally follows, where the Spirit does not reveal, that no one understands them. And yet Christ has taken these words from Is. 6, 9, 10, where the high understanding of divine foreknowledge is touched upon, that He conceals and reveals to whom He will and has had in mind from eternity." 14) That was the reason why this form of preaching was the usual form employed by Jesus. He was not wont to speak without a parable to the people, neither then nor at any other time. But He also had the habit of interpreting or explaining everything, parables and all teaching, to His disciples in private. He literally unloosened the difficulties, which might offer the same baffling task as a hard knot. By constant repetition of the most important doctrines and their application He intended to impress the Gospel-truths upon their minds. This method is thoroughly approved and to be recommended in the study of all the words of Christ; it will not remain without blessing.

Christ Stilling the Tempest. Mark 4, 35-41.

The departure: V. 35. **And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.** V. 36. **And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships.** V. 37. **And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.** It was on the evening of the day on which Christ had taught the people and His disciples in so many parables. He was probably very tired from the strain of speaking for many hours and desired a few hours of rest. So He proposed to His disciples that they cross over to the other side of the lake. They were with Him in the boat which He had used as platform for speaking and could easily carry out this intention, at least far more easily than to attempt to break through the wall of solid humanity on the shore. They simply left the people behind them as they hoisted sail and moved away from the shore. There was no delay, but also no special provision for the trip. Just as He was, without food or refreshment of any kind, they took Him along. Even so, there were some small boats that accompanied theirs. They had proceeded for some distance when a tornado-like storm broke upon the lake, a phenomenon which was by no means unusual in the deep valley and kettle-like depression of the lake. From all sides the waves rushed upon the boat, rising so high as to fall down upon it and thus filling it with water very quickly. It was a real crisis, and one that was apt to make the heart of the strongest and most seasoned sailor quake with fear.

The miracle: V. 38. **And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they awake Him and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?** V. 39. **And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.** V. 40. **And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?**

V. 41. **And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?** In the midst of all this turmoil Jesus, true man as He was, tired out from the day's hard work, was soundly asleep, lying in the stern of the boat, with His head on the low bench or railing known as the "pillow," used by the helmsman to rest on when the ship follows the helm without difficulty. But with His humanity thus visibly portrayed, there was combined the divinity of Him that rules all, in whose hand all the powers of nature are held securely: the storm did not bother Him in the least. But the disciples soon gave up what seemed to them an unequal struggle. They roused Him from His sleep and said to Him: Teacher, does it cause Thee no worry that we are being destroyed? They include Him in their prayer, but are chiefly concerned about their own welfare. Whether this was a cry of fear or an actual reproach, at any rate they showed little faith in crying thus. Jesus told them so even before He arose, Matt. 18, 26. But then He had compassion with their weakness. He suddenly got up, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea: Be quiet, hold your peace. And at His word the miracle was performed before their wondering eyes. The wind did not merely die down slowly, it ceased abruptly; and at once there was a great quietness, all the more noticeable after the rushing turmoil of a few minutes before. The boat was now gently parting the mirror-like surface of the calm sea. But then the Lord took the opportunity of reproving His disciples very earnestly: How fearful are you in this manner! How is it that you have no faith? Their trust in the Lord, their confidence in His almighty power, was still very weak and uncertain. More than a dozen times Mark mentions this weakness. Undoubtedly the chagrin and deep humility of Peter caused him to dwell upon this point so often in his account of the days and the Gospel of Jesus. The impression of the miracle on the disciples was profound. They feared a great fear; they felt utterly insignificant in the presence of this man that had given them evidence of such superhuman power. They said one to another: Who, then, is this man that wind and sea yield obedience to Him? Each of the two was a wild, lawless element; and yet He controls them as easily as though such an experience were an every-day occurrence with Him! Note the pictorial vividness of Mark's narrative: Evening, the sudden departure, the convoy of ships, the violence of the storm, the ship all but sinking, the image of Him that slept on the ship's pillow, the reproach of the distressed men that Jesus cared not, the words of rebuke to the wind, the strong reproof of the disciples, their great fear, and its effect. 15)

The evangelist here pictures Jesus, the Lord of the universe, who commands the sea, and it gives Him unquestioning obedience. The man Jesus is the almighty God. With His human voice He restored peace in the uproar of the elements. His human nature possesses also the divine glory and majesty! Jesus is an almighty man, was an almighty man even when He was here on earth in the midst of His humiliation. From that little nutshell of a boat, even while He was asleep, He governed heaven and earth, land and sea. Only His divine majesty was covered by the form of a servant. And as He did then, so He does now: He uses His divine power, His omnipotence, in the interest, in the service of men, especially of His disciples, of His believers. That is the comfort of this story.

Summary. *Jesus tells the parable of the fourfold soil, expounding it to His disciples, also that of the seed that is cast into the ground, of the grain of mustard-seed, and others, and makes a journey across the sea, in the course of which He stills the tempest.*

MARK CHAPTER 5. [VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Gadarene Demoniac. Mark 5, 1-20.

On the eastern shore of the lake: V. 1. **And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.** The journey across the sea, which ordinarily took only a few hours, was prolonged, on account of the storm, to last all night. The next day they landed in the country of the

Gergesenes, or Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee, Matt. 8, 28; Luke 8, 26. It was known by both names, from the chief cities of the neighborhood. "We read.... that Jesus and His disciples 'came to the other side of the sea to the country of the Gerasenes.' The Authorized Version reads: 'to the country of the Gadarenes.' The country to which Jesus came at this time cannot have been that of the Decapolitan city Gerasa, for, as we have seen, that lay far to the south. It was in a direct line nearly fifty miles from the Sea of Galilee. Neither can it have been to the region of Gadara that He came, for Gadara lay at least five miles to the south across the deep valley of the Yarmuk. There was, however, on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee a town called Gergesa, the modern Kursi. This place was near the city of Hippos, and possibly one of the towns subordinate to Hippos. As Jesus and the disciples walked back from the sea, they met the demoniac, whom Jesus healed." 16) The whole region or district southeast of the Sea of Galilee was indiscriminately called that of the Gadarenes and Gerasenes. It was predominantly heathen.

The demoniac: V. 2. **And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,** V. 3. **who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains,** V. 4. **because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.** V. 5. **And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.** Matthew, in relating this story, speaks of two demoniacs, while Mark mentions only one, the speaker of the two, and probably also the fiercer of them. Hardly had Jesus 'stepped out of the boat when this man came running to meet Him from his home among the tombs in the neighborhood. He was a man in, that is, fully possessed by, an unclean spirit. The power of the devil and his angels is such that it always renders the person whom he gets into his dominion, spiritually unclean. Here the whole person, body, mind, and soul, was possessed of the devil. This demoniac had his dwelling-place in the tombs, probably in some of the burial-places which had been excavated or hewn into the side of the hills. His fierceness was such as to make his confinement by means of fetters and chains absolutely impossible. The piling up of the negatives emphasizes this peculiarity very strongly. All attempts to keep him in constraint by means of foot-guards and with chains had been futile. He tore the chains apart and shattered the foot-guards, whether of metal or rope, and no man was able in any way to keep him in subjection. All the methods employed in the case of wild animals availed nothing in his case. The strength of the devil and his angels in him was too great for human skill and ingenuity. He was given no rest by the tormentors living in him, but always, night and day, he was driven by them through the tombs and through the hills, making it dangerous to travel in that neighborhood. The people that caught sight of him saw that he was usually engaged in striking and mutilating himself with sharp stones, uttering at the same time fierce cries, that might well cause the stoutest heart to quail. It is a terrible thing if the devil gains ascendancy over a person, not one whit less so if this power extends over his mind and soul only than if it includes also the body.

Acknowledging Jesus as the superior: V. 6. **But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshiped Him,** V. 7. **and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not.** V. 8. **For He said unto Him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.** V. 9. **And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion; for we are many.** V. 10. **And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.** Other people had been in danger of their lives on account of the fierceness of the man. Demoniac strength and utter misery were combined in the poor sufferer. But here the man saw Jesus, and Him the evil spirits knew, had known Him from the time that they were, together with their leader, Satan, thrown out of heaven, Jude, v.6. They must needs recognize Him, no matter where they met Him, as their sovereign Lord and King. And so the man came running and did the Lord homage, casting himself down at His feet in a worshipful attitude,

acknowledging even by his action that he knew Jesus to be the Lord. And at the same time, with a cry of fear and prayer, he begs Christ: What business have we two, Thou and I, together, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? The confession was apparently wrung from him under the pressure of abject terror, together with the plea that Jesus should not torment him, not condemn him at this time to the torment of hell, which was his eventual lot, just as he was even then suffering damnation in being banished from heaven. The evil spirits thus were obliged to recognize in Christ their future Judge, wanted to be rid of His presence, and yet must plead for the slightest favor and extension of time. For though the place of torment is even now their home, yet, by God's permission, in the interval before the last Judgment, they have power to torture and destroy God's creatures on earth. They, more than any one else, dread the last Judgment. For then the place of torment will become a dungeon from which there is no escape and no hope of the slightest reprieve. Then they will see and feel nothing but the fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Then the torture of damnation will never have an end, 2 Pet. 2, 4. This cry of terror was occasioned by the fact that Christ was just about to say (conative imperfect); it was evident from Christ's manner and look that it was on His tongue to speak the word which would release the poor sufferer from the clutches of his tormentors. Christ now permits an intermission in the proceedings lest the evil spirits vent their spite on the man. He asked the demoniac: What name is thine? And the answer, with the explanation, was: Legion, on account of their great number. Not only one unclean spirit was here devastating the temple of the poor man's body, but a host of them. For the Roman legion comprised a number of between five and six thousand men, and the members of such a body were united under iron discipline. The name was thus the "emblem of irresistible power and of a multitude organized into unity." 17) The devil is not so listless in his method of attack as the Christians are in warding it off. Not only does he walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour, but he has his armies, the spirits of darkness, trained in obedience and concerted attack. The spirits now begged Jesus not to send them out of this region which they seem to have favored on account of the nature of the population. It is a strange thing to find the devil pleading with the Lord for a favor; but if it suits his plans, he can be most abject.

The casting out: V. 11. **Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.** V. 12. **And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine that we may enter into them.** V. 13. **And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.** Not in the immediate vicinity of the speaker, but at some distance, yet in plain sight, on the slope of the hills near the sea, there was a large herd of swine grazing. To the Jews, swine were unclean animals, and they were not allowed to eat them. But here on the border the inhabitants were influenced but little by Jewish customs and laws. The evil spirits knew that Jesus would not give them permission to enter into any *man*, and therefore they wanted to vent their spite and helpless anger on *dumb animals*. They changed their plea to this effect, that they might take possession of the swine. The devil is a murderer from the beginning. If he cannot destroy the soul of man, he takes possession of the body; and when this is forbidden him, he tortures brute beasts. His one desire is to destroy the life which God has created. Jesus here permitted, gave leave to, the spirits to do as they had asked; it was better that animals should perish than that man, made in the image of God, should be tormented. The result: With a mighty uproar the swine, numbering about two thousand, cast themselves down the precipice overhanging the sea, and were drowned in the water. The devil, in his work of destruction, is not permitted to go one step farther than God gives him leave. Note: Why it is that God sometimes permits the spirits of darkness and destruction to work harm to His creation is one of the secrets which our weak reason cannot fathom. We know only so much, that the loss of money and goods are chastisements of God, by which He intends to rouse men out of their security.

The effect of the miracle: V. 14. **And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.** V. 15. **And they come to Jesus, and**

see him that was possessed with the devil and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid. V. 16. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. V. 17. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. A sad sequel: pigs held in higher esteem than man. Note the pithy, vivid narration of the evangelist. The swineherders fled and announced to the owners in the city and the vicinity the fate of their property, and these came to verify the report, probably with some resentment against the man that had deprived them, even if only indirectly, of their swine. Their way led directly to Jesus, and they could now gain the conviction that the former demoniac was thoroughly healed. He that had formerly run through the hills with loud cries now sat at the feet of Jesus as quietly as anyone else might have done; he that had formerly discarded all clothing was now fully clothed; he that had formerly raved in madness now had the full use of his mind and senses. It was a sight which might well fill them with fear. And as they were standing around, the witnesses of the miracle related the entire story, the cure and the subsequent catastrophe, which had resulted in the loss of the swine. Jesus, by this miracle, had again proved Himself the mighty Deliverer from the power of Satan. This much must be evident to all. It was a visitation of mercy upon these people that the great Prophet from Galilee had come into their midst. But here it proved to be true what experience testifies to in a thousand cases: the power of the devil over the heart of man is more insidious and terrible than that over the members. The eyes of these people were not opened. They began, all of them, to urge Him to leave the country. "They took heart to desire Christ's departure, in a conflict of fear and anger, of fawning and obstinacy." They spurned the time of their visitation. The Lord often tries people whom He would make His own, by sending them some form of misfortune to cause them to turn from the service of earthly things to Him. But they do not know the things that belong to their peace, they are hidden from their eyes. They feel resentment against the Lord, they refuse to accept His mercy, and choose for themselves the path that leads to destruction.

Christ gives further evidence of His mercy: V. 18. **And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. V. 19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. V. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. And all men did marvel.** Jesus embarked again" He went into the boat. Since the people of the region showed such a hostile spirit from the start and did not consider themselves worthy of eternal life, He left them with the animals they loved more. But one there was that had felt more than a bodily healing in himself, the former demoniac. He begged the Lord, while the latter was embarking, to be permitted to be with Him, to become a regular disciple. It was not the fear of the return of the demons that caused the plea, but the knowledge that here was a Healer of the soul as well as of the body. But Jesus refused his petition, since He had a different plan in mind. His time of mercy for the people of this region had not yet come to an end. He commissioned this man to be the first heathen preacher. He should return to his home and to his relatives, giving them a full account of the help which he had experienced, and above all of the mercy of Jesus. Of all the blessings and benefits which we praise as the gift of the Lord the greatest is that of His mercy in Jesus Christ the Savior. And the man did even more than the Lord had given him to perform. Beginning, no doubt, in his own family circle, he became a messenger throughout that entire country. The Decapolis, or the region of the ten cities, was that part of Palestine that lay southeast and east of the Sea of Galilee, including parts of Perea and Gaulanitis. Throughout this region he proclaimed his message, seconded undoubtedly by the other demoniac. And the heathen population, which for the most part inhabited this country, was deeply impressed. They all were filled with wonder. Whether there was any other result is not related. At any rate, they had the opportunity of learning to know the great Prophet, who was willing and anxious to give them the assurance of His everlasting grace and mercy and thus to fulfill the object of the Gospel in them. It is ever thus that the message of

the great miracles of God for the salvation of men arouses curiosity and wonder. But the Gospel also always works, at least in some people, a cheerful assent and acceptance of the news that will save their souls.

Raising of the Daughter of Jairus. Mark 5,21-43.

The prayer of Jairus: V. 21. **And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him; and He was nigh unto the sea.** V. 22. **And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagog, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet,** V. 23. **and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live.** V. 24. **And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him.** Mark relates this story at greater length, with closer attention to detail than the other evangelists, Matt. 9, 18; Luke 8,41, except in the matter of symptoms of the sickness, in which Luke, the physician, is more exact. Upon leaving the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus sailed directly across the sea, back to the region which He had left only the day before. Most of the people had undoubtedly not yet thought of returning home, and they could therefore soon assemble once more and come to Him, as He was by the Sea. They gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him, Luke 8, 41. But before He had had an opportunity of performing the work of His ministry, as was His custom, one of the chief men, of the rulers of the local synagog, whose name was Jairus, came, looking for Jesus. As soon as he saw the Lord, the distraught father fell down at His feet and begged and urged Him most earnestly, with many words. The words pour forth from his mouth in the anxiety of his pleading: My daughter is about breathing her last; she may even now be dead. Come at once and quickly; lay Thy hands upon her that she may be healed and live. Jesus, after His usual manner of kind sympathy and willingness to help, did not tarry by the seaside, but turned at once to go after the pleading father. It was, as usual, the faith implied and expressed in his words that impressed the Lord. Jairus was sure he was possessed of unshakable faith that Jesus could perform this miracle, this cure. He sees the fulfillment of his wish, if Christ would but consent to come. But he must first pass through a test of his patience. Mark notes especially that the people pressed around the Lord from all sides; He jostled and pushed with the crowd.

The woman with an issue of blood: V. 25. **And a certain woman, which had had an issue of blood twelve years,** V. 26. **and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,** V. 27. **when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment.** V. 28. **For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.** V. 29. **And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.** While Jesus was, at the urging of Jairus, hurrying towards his house, there was an interruption on the way. A woman, otherwise unknown, had had an issue of blood for twelve years, which rendered her Levitically unclean, Lev. 15, 25. It excluded her from public worship in Temple and synagog, and isolated her even from the company of her relatives. The manner of Mark's putting it is rather expressive: She had suffered much from, at the hands of, many physicians; she had become impoverished, she had spent all her substance in her quest for health; and all this had been of no benefit to her; instead of getting better she rather became worse. This description is particularly suitable in the case of those people, both within and without the medical profession, who think that science is paramount and must say the last word. In spite of the great advance in medicine and surgery in the last century, and especially during the last decades, there are still many individual sicknesses and epidemics that baffle the entire medical profession. This is not said in disparagement of the profession, but in the interest of truth. People that make the doctor their god, and trust in him absolutely, may under circumstances find themselves in the position of this woman. It remains true to this day, and the more skilful and conscientious the physician is, the more freely will he acknowledge it: the Lord must direct the diagnosis and bless the medicine, otherwise the science of the

greatest physician will avail nothing. This woman had now heard of Jesus, the many laudatory things that were being circulated through the country concerning His ability and willingness to work healing in cases which seemed hopeless. Her condition and the consciousness of her Levitical uncleanness, also her deep humility would not permit her to come forth openly before the multitude and address the Lord. From what she had heard concerning Him, she had come to believe with a conviction born of faith in this Messiah of the world, that the mere touch of the hem of His garment would restore her health. She could carry out her intention all the more easily in this great crowd since they pressed upon the Lord. She hoped thus to remain unobserved. Only to touch His clothes, that was her one thought. And her faith was rewarded. Without delay, at once, the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she knew with a happy conviction that her body was cured of that scourge which the Lord had laid upon her these many years. There is food for thought, as Luther suggests, in the fact that the Buffering of this woman had begun at the same time that the daughter of Jairus had come to gladden the hearts of her parents. To bear such a burden as this woman did for so many years, and then to be released from the afflicting bonds, is an experience which should rightly cause the deepest thankfulness in the hearts of all such sufferers.

The woman's confession: V. 30. **And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press and said, Who touched My clothes?** V. 31. **And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?** V. 32. **And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing.** V. 33. **, But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.** V. 34. **And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.** Jesus, the almighty God, is also omniscient. He knew all the while what the poor woman had been planning in her anxiety to regain her health. He was also fully conscious in Himself that a miraculous power had gone forth from Him. He had permitted the people before to touch Him in order to be made whole, chapter 3, 10. But here was a case in which the woman had taken the liberty, in trusting faith, to draw the healing power out of Him. So He made ready to test her faith. Turning round, He inquired whether anyone had touched His clothes, or, more exactly: Who touched My clothes? And He immediately looked about to see whether the woman would confess. To the disciples His question seemed more than strange. He was in the midst of the crowd, jostled on all sides. Why, then, ask the question as to who had touched Him? But the woman realized that her act had been discovered and was known to the Lord. She was trembling with fear for her daring, and therefore came, fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth, the entire story of her illness and its misery and suffering, and the hopes that she had entertained since learning of His wonderful miracles of healing would but practice this method of dealing with the Lord oftener, there would be less suffering in the world. He is always ready to hear the recital of all our woes and trials; and He is willing to help us at all times. His help may not always be along the lines that we think right, but it will always be in the way that is best for us. "Such touching the Lord does not want to permit to be secret; as an example to us. Therefore He urges the woman with His questions that she must come forward and permit herself to be seen, also tell everything that had been done to her publicly before everybody, in order that He may have cause to praise such faith and teach us all what a cheerful service it is for Him, if we console ourselves with His help and expect nothing but good from Him. Therefore He praises the woman so highly and speaks to her so encouragingly: Be of good cheer, daughter; thy faith hath helped thee. There the disciples themselves must admit that the Lord has not asked in vain, and that it was not an ordinary touching, but something out of the ordinary, upon which much depends for the Lord and for ourselves. -But it is a peculiar speech which Jesus here makes, if we would think of it. He confesses that a power has gone forth from Him. As the woman now stands before the Lord and confesses the benefit, He does not show that such power has gone forth from Him, but ascribes it to the faith of the woman, although not she herself, but the Lord had helped her. This the Lord does for this reason, to

indicate how well that pleases Him if thou expect everything good from Him and seek help from Him. As though He would say: Watch closely and learn cheerfully to believe, no matter in what trouble you happen to be; for I would much rather help you than you are able to ask it. I would much rather deliver you from death than that you desire life, as He here gives evidence with His action, where it is so easily done, and He so gladly permits the power to go from Him." 18) That word: Thy faith hath healed thee, gives the real reason for the cure. True faith can do anything in the sight of God, but its special strength lies in the spiritual field. The trust growing out of redeeming faith must be a conviction so firm, so undoubting, that it is ready to storm heaven itself, by His promise. And this conviction, that they can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth them, must live in all Christians.

Jesus reassures Jairus: V. 35. **While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagog's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?** V. 36. **As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagog, Be not afraid, only believe!** V. 37. **And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James.** The delay caused by the woman had made Jesus and the entire multitude stop for some time, perhaps for five to ten minutes, with Jairus in the throes of impatience. And Jesus had not yet finished His comforting words to the woman that had been healed in such a miraculous manner, when some messengers from the house of the ruler brought the overwhelming news that the girl had died, that she was even now lying there dead, lifeless. There could be no doubt as to this fact, and that fact also, in the opinion of the messengers, settled the question. This being so, why should Jairus persist in vexing, molesting the Lord, the great Teacher; it was all useless now. These servants had been willing enough to concede that the great Prophet might be able to heal a person, to drive away a sickness, but His art and power could not be expected to avail anything in the case of death. Jesus heard this communication, and it gave Him much concern. Jairus had proved himself one that trusted in the Lord, but with the present intelligence there was danger that his confidence would be lost. So Jesus gave him a word which was to hold his wavering confidence,: Fear not; only believe! Fear is incompatible with faith, Rom. 8, 15; Is. 12, 2; 2 Tim. .1, 7; 1 John 4, 18. Firm trust in the power of the Savior was now more necessary than ever, for death had claimed the girl as his victim, and the father should feel that Christ was able to call her back even from the land of the departed. And now Jesus did a surprising, unusual thing: He turned back, not only the multitude, but even His disciples, with the exception of His most intimate friends, Peter, James, and John. The miracle which was to take place in this house was not to be performed before the inquisitive gaze of an unappreciative multitude, nor before such as were not soundly balanced in their relation to Him.

Recalling the dead girl to life: V. 38. **And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagog, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.** V. 39. **And when He was come in,, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.** V. 40. **And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.** V. 41. **And He took the damsel by the hand and said unto her, Talitha, cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.** V. 42. **And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.** V. 43. **And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.** Upon arriving at the house of Jairus, they were met by sights and sounds that emphasized the fact of a dead person's being on the premises. Even the poorest Jews felt constrained to hire two pipers and at least one woman to take care of the mourning in the case of a death. Note: Mark calls attention, above all, to the turmoil, to the confused din caused by the many mourners; Matthew speaks of the minstrels and the piping; Luke refers to the weeping and bewailing. They were busily engaged when Jesus stepped into the house with His companions, weeping and howling without restraint. But Jesus took charge ~f the situation at once. He reproached them for the

noise they were making, stating that the child was not dead, but sleeping. Those were the words of a man that lived in the certainty of the resurrection, Jesus Christ, the Master of death, who has conquered and bound death. "These words we should diligently note, that the Lord here says: The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth; for they are comforting words, for which, if they were purchasable, we should gladly pay all, in order that we might remember, understand, and believe them. For he that can look upon a dead person as though he were merely lying in bed; he that can change his eyesight so that he can look upon death as a sleep,-he might well boast of a peculiar art, which no man otherwise possesses. Therefore learn from this gospel that death, in the sight of Christ the Lord, is nothing but a sleep, as we see here that He wakes the dead maiden with the hand, as out of a sleep." 19) The derisive laughter of the official mourners did not deter the Lord for a minute. He cast them all out of the house, not one as permitted to remain as witness of the miracle. He then took the father and mother of the maiden, as the parents, and His three disciples as witnesses, went into the room of death, grasped the maiden by the hand, and spoke the almighty words: Maiden, arise. He used the Aramaic language, which was probably the tongue which He learned as a boy, and which He commonly employed in His discourses. Mark translates the words for the sake of his Roman readers. Death was obliged to flee at the words of Christ, it must yield its hold on the maiden's body. The girl could get up from her couch, she could walk about, she could partake of food; in short, she was returned to life, she was fully recovered. And she could now sustain life by the usual means. No wonder that those present, parents and disciples, were astonished and wrought up almost to ecstasy, since this miracle was the first one to show the power of Christ over the most dreaded enemy of mankind. Jesus finally gave them all orders that they should not make it public. He wants no false Messianic hopes to be aroused, and the way and manner of the restoration should also not be made a matter of common talk. Especially should the expectation of the repetition of such acts not be awakened in the people, lest His ministry be seriously interfered with. We have in Jesus, to this day, the Lord that can save from death. And when Christ, our Life, will be made manifest on that great day, then He will awaken, by the almighty power of His voice, all our dead relatives and friends, and will take all that died in the faith in Him, into the eternal home above which He has prepared for them that love Him. "We should, then, learn from this gospel that all misfortune, no matter how great it appears before thine eyes, is before our Lord Jesus less than nothing. For since death in a Christian is nothing, then blindness, leprosy, pestilence, and other sickness must be still smaller and of less import. Therefore, if Thou seest sin, sickness, poverty, or anything else in thee, do not let this terrify thee; close thy carnal eyes and open the spiritual ones, and say: I am a Christian, and I have a Lord who with one word can stop all this foolishness; why should I be so seriously worried about it? For certain it is, as easily as Christ helps this maiden out of bodily death, in which she was lying, so easily will He help us also, if only we believe and trust Him to help us." 20)

Summary. *Jesus drives out the devils from the Gadarene demoniac and makes him His witness in the region of Decapolis; He then returns to the west side of the sea, heals the, woman with the issue of blood, and raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead.*

MARK CHAPTER 6.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Jesus at Nazareth. Mark 6, 1-6a.

Another tour of Galilee: V. 1. **And He went out from thence and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him.** V. 2. **And when the Sabbath-day was come, He began to teach in the synagog; and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?** V. 3. **Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and**

Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him. V. 4. **But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.** From thence, from Capernaum and its vicinity, Jesus went away. The city which He had chosen as His home during His Galilean ministry had had ample opportunity of hearing Him and of knowing and accepting Him as the Savior of the world. Till now the success of His preaching had not been unqualified. The people were willing enough to see the Prophet perform miracles, but took little or no interest in the Word of eternal life. And so He removed the mercy of His presence from them, returning there only at the end of His labors in the North. He went to His fatherland, to His home town, Nazareth. It was the city in which He had grown up, from which He hailed, in which He naturally took a great interest, chapter 1, 9. 24. His disciples, especially the Twelve that were now enrolled under that name, followed Him. Their theological training was being carried forward with all speed, for the time was short. When it was Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagog. Note: Throughout the gospels, the attendance of Jesus at services is related as a matter of course; it was self-evident for Him to be in the place where the Word of God was taught, at the time set apart for that purpose. Here the usual courtesy shown to a visiting teacher was extended to Him: He began to teach. It was not merely that He started His discourse, but He wanted the people of His home town to be the beneficiaries of the Gospel-message; for since the beginning of His ministry He had not been in this neighborhood. The address, or talk, as He delivered it that morning, was of a nature and of a content such as to provoke the greatest surprise and astonishment among His hearers. The comments were many and varied, and Mark records them faithfully: Whence did all this come to this man, this ability to speak, the wonderful content of His address, the power to perform such mighty works of which we have been told? Such speech, such wisdom, such powers in such a well known person? How is it possible? What can it mean? But this eagerness for information, which might well have served as a type of curiosity for saving knowledge, was soon replaced by jealousy and contempt, the spirit of opposition. Some sneering remarks are heard: Is not this the carpenter, the worker in wood? the trades of the carpenter, the joiner, and the cabinetmaker being united in one person. A Christian writer of the second century who had been born in Samaria relates that Jesus during His early manhood made plows and yokes. The people of Nazareth thought they were thoroughly familiar with His family and antecedents. The son of Mary He is to them, Joseph having died, according to tradition, when Jesus was eighteen years old. His brothers (half-brothers, cousins) James and Joses and Judas and Simon were well known to the townspeople, as were the sisters of Christ (half-sisters, cousins). They thought that these facts precluded the possibility of His having learned anything worth while, not realizing that they were thereby passing judgment upon their own town and upon themselves, just as is done today, in similar situations. The upshot of the whole matter was that they were offended at Him, that is, they took offense wrongfully. Note: Even today people take offense at the lowliness of the Gospel and its preaching. If it came to them in the guise of something new, a new philosophical system, they would think it worth their while; but the simplicity of the Gospel, and the fact that they have been familiar with its teaching, as they foolishly think, from their youth, sets them against its glorious tidings and shuts them out from the glories of heaven. Jesus, among other things, Matt. 13, 54-57, reminded them of a proverbial saying which fitted the case perfectly: Not is a prophet without honor except in his fatherland and among his kinsmen. This is a truth which is universally accepted. Instead of rejoicing over the fact that God has given one of their own family, out of their own midst, gifts and abilities to accomplish something for His honor, the kinsmen and former fellow-citizens will do everything in their power to discredit him. That was Christ's experience.

The result of the opposition: V. 5. **And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them.** V. 6a. **And He marveled because of their unbelief.** Jesus had come with an open hand to distribute from His own bounty and that of His Father. The reception accorded Him shut off the people from the gifts of His mercy. Unbelief hindered the

exhibition of the Lord's miraculous power. Unbelief always stops the hand of God when He extends it to shower His benefits upon mankind. Unbelief is, therefore, the sin of sins, since it rejects what God is so willing to give in and through Christ. Jesus indeed, in a quiet way, performed a few miracles in laying His hands upon a few sick persons, but these were exceptions. The community as such received no benefit from the visit of Jesus. Their unbelief was such that it caused even Jesus to wonder. To us, of course, it is an even greater mystery that men should reject Jesus and the Word of their salvation. But that should not cause us to become disheartened in our work for Him; the result of our labors is in His hands.

The Mission of the Twelve. Mark 6, 6b-13.

Preparations for their journey: **V. 6b. And He went round about the villages, teaching. V. 7. And He called unto Him the Twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; V. 8. and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse, V. 9. but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.** Note: The people of Nazareth rejected the Lord, they wanted nothing of Him; but that did not discourage Him nor cause Him to abandon His work for others, — a significant hint for us in the work for Christ. And while He was making His journey through the villages of Lower Galilee, continuing His labors in the Word, He taught His disciples. The Twelve were now to become His associates; they were, in a measure, to work in an independent capacity. And for the beginning of this work He gives them special instructions. To make their ministry somewhat easier, to give the individual a sort of moral backing, He sent them forth two by two. As a necessary part of their equipment, that they might substantiate their mission, He gave them power over unclean spirits, over demons that were wont to torment people. The authority and the ability to command these evil spirits argued for a power beyond human endeavor, and would thus give their preaching the necessary prestige. Their luggage, dunnage, or duffel for their journey was to be kept at the minimum. They should take nothing on the trip, for the way, not even a staff, no bread, no hand-bag, no money in their girdle; literally: He gave them instructions not to take anything for their trip, not only not a staff, no bread, not a sack, no money in the girdle, but be provided with sandals, also not to put on two tunics. What the Lord said in these words is plain: It is not at all necessary that you be fully equipped for your preaching-trip; you are not going out for a vacation journey, but to labor in the ministry of the Word. 22) The sack of which the Lord here speaks throws an interesting side-light upon customs in those days. "The wallet mentioned is now seen not to have been a mere traveling-bag, as was formerly supposed, but almost certainly a beggar's 'collecting bag,' such as peripatetic religious teachers were accustomed to carry at that time, for it is called by this same name. Our Lord means to teach that His disciples are to go out as laymen, not in any special ministerial garb or making any special claim of mendicant piety, but nevertheless dependent for their living upon those who receive the Word." 23) Those that serve the Gospel should not be weighted down by a great deal of earthly baggage, should not be involved in the business of this world, lest their ministry be harmed and the effect of their preaching be spoiled. "They should speak or do nothing for the sake of money, favor, honor, not set their hearts upon money, honor, goods. The ministry of the Word seeks something different, has a different object, namely, eternal salvation and the honor of God." 24)

Further instruction: **V. 10. And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. V. 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city. V. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. V. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.** Wherever it may be that they entered into a house, whether in city or town or village, there, in that

house, they should stay. They should neither lose time for their work by searching for a pleasant boarding-place, nor should they bring themselves into the suspicion of partiality. In the house which they should enter first they should stay until they left the village or neighborhood; that should be their home for the time being. If, however, it should so happen that some place, city, town, or village, would not receive them nor its inhabitants listen to them, they should go away from that place. And in so doing, they should shake the very dust, not only from their feet and clothing, but the dust under their feet, the dust from the roads that adhered to the soles of their sandals. This was a sign that there could be no communion with such foolish and untractable people, that they must be considered on a level with the heathen. It was a testimony, a judgment upon them. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, that had been exterminated by one of the most awful visitations of God upon the wicked, will receive a more lenient sentence on the last day than such willful opponents of the mercy of God. The twelve disciples followed instructions; they carried out their mission through preaching and healing. The burden of their call was the need of repentance, in order that the sweet news of the Gospel might find a ready acceptance. Mark also relates that they expelled many demons and effected the cure of many suffering with various minor ailments. The power of the Lord went with them, according to His promise.

Death of John the Baptist. Mark 6, 14-32.

Conjectures concerning the identity of Christ: V. 14. **And King Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.** V. 15. **Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.** V. 16. **But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.** Where there is no fear of God, superstition reigns supreme. Herod's conscience was bothering him for a crime which had been committed some time before. Hearing of the mighty deeds of Jesus, as His name and fame spread throughout the country, Herod advanced the theory that John the Baptist had arisen from the dead and because of that fact supernatural powers were being manifested in him; the fear of ghosts and haunts coming to the foreground. Others believed that Elijah, who had always been vested with special powers, and whose return was definitely looked for by a great many Jews, in a misunderstanding of Mal. 4, 5, was represented in the person of Jesus. Still others thought that the Lord was a prophet like one of the prophets of old, that also had gone about in the country of the Jews, preaching and performing miracles. But though Herod may have heard the opinions of the others through his courtiers, he clung to his statement: Him whom I beheaded, John, it is; he is risen. The torment of a bad conscience, of a guilty heart, is worse than any torture that might be devised by man. It causes people to suspect where there is no ground for suspicion, and puts ghosts before the eyes of men where there is no reason for fear. Herod had reasons for trembling.

Herod reproved by John: V. 17. **For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.** V. 18. **For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.** V. 19. **Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not,** V. 20. **for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.** Some personal facts concerning Herod and his family are here told. Throughout the passage the name king is applied to him by courtesy only; for Herod was merely tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He had resided for some time at Machaerus, a strong fortress of the Jews east of the Dead Sea. But he built Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, as his capital, fitting it out with all the luxury that he could devise. He had been married to the daughter of King Aretas of Arabia, but had rejected her for the sake of Herodias, then the wife of Philip, Herod's half-brother, not the ethnarch. His philosophy of life might be summed up in the sentence: Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow

we shall be dead. The saddest incident in his life is that of which the evangelist here gives an account. John the Baptist, with the fearlessness which should characterize every preacher of repentance, had severely reprimanded him for his adulterous union with Herodias, telling him that it was not right, that it was not the proper thing, that it could not be permitted according to the Law of God that he continue in this anti-Scriptural union. "It so came to pass that Herod the king was living in open, well-known offense. For he had the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living, with him as his lawful wife. This was to John a disagreeable business, since he through his preaching was supposed to rebuke all offense and turn the people from it; for that was his calling. Therefore he does what a pious preacher should do, is not concerned about the fact that Herod is a great king, but just as he rebuked other people for their sins and admonished them to abstain from them, thus he rebukes and admonishes Herod also, and says that it is not right for him to have his brother's wife. This displeased Herod very much; and the harlot still more, for she was troubled lest the sermon concerning her bring fruit. For this reason she lay in wait for John and would have liked to kill him, but she could not. Herod also would gladly have done it, but he was afraid, since he saw what testimony and praise John had with everybody. For that reason, since John would not desist from his rebuking and admonishing, he caused him to be arrested and put him in prison, in order that he could no longer call out so openly." 25) Incidentally, Herod, as is the case with many a weak character, felt the influence of the mightier and morally greater mind. Herodias had no scruples of any kind; she was determined, she frankly sought to kill John. But feeble, vacillating Herod was between two fires, the people, on the one hand, esteeming John as a prophet, and Herodias, on the other hand, demanding his death. In the mean time Herod, in more than one instance, gave heed to the words of John, and many a word which he heard from the mouth of this fearless exhorter caused him to hesitate and think twice before committing: further lawlessness. Thus matters came to a deadlock, while John was kept in prison at Machaerus.

The birthday festival: V. 21. **And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; V. 22. and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. V. 23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. V. 24. And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. V. 25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.** Convenient this birthday festival was, coming just at a good, at the right time to agree with the vengeful plans of Herodias, for she still cherished her grudge against John the Baptist. On his birth day Herod must needs celebrate in style, in a manner befitting one who expected soon to bear the title of king, by permission of the Emperor and the Roman Senate. The mighty ones and the rulers of thousands and the first families of Galilee were invited, that is, the state, civil, and military officials, and the socially important persons of Galilee: an imposing gathering for such an important event. The joy of the festival banquet was at its height, the guests having undoubtedly freely imbibed and being in the condition of semi-intoxication when reason and sense have alike fled, though articulate speech remains. There had probably also been the usual forms of dancing after the Oriental fashion for the amusement of the guests, when a number not on the program was introduced by the wily Herodias. She had trained her own daughter in the voluptuous dances of the dancing girls, and the girl came into the banquet-hall and danced with reckless *abandon* and shamelessness. The dance pleased Herod and those that were reclining about the tables. They had just about reached the condition when such exhibitions were inclined to appeal to them with special force. Herod immediately made an extravagant promise to the girl, encouraging her to name the reward that was to be hers for this dance. And when she, either from exhaustion after the strenuous exercise or in natural hesitation over the offer, was still standing undecided, he added an oath, swearing that she should have her desire, though it aspire to half

of his kingdom: a true example of maudlin, amatory generosity, as one commentator calls it. It may be that her mother had instructed her even beforehand what she should ask for, as the account of Matthew implies, though not expressly says, and now she needed a further urging. At any rate, she hurries to her mother, who promptly impresses upon her the need to ask for, and insist upon, only one thing. Whether there was another determining factor or not, Salome, the dancer, was now ready to do her mother's bidding. Without delay and with a quick step, as though the business in hand was the most interesting and joyous in the world, she returns to the banquet-hall. Her words properly indicate the condition of her heart: I want that thou without delay givest me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. Gruesome words from the lips of a young girl, "request proffered with a cool, pert impudence almost outdoing the mother."

The execution: V. 26. **And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.** V. 27. **And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison,** V. 28. **and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.** V. 29. **And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.** The fact that the wish of Salome could be carried out so rapidly makes it very probable that the banquet was held at Machaerus. When the girl made her gruesome request, there may have been some gasping in the table-round, and Herod himself may have been sobered by the unexpected turn of events. But it was too late, in his opinion, to retract. And there may have been a feeling of relief mingled with his regret and sorrow. But though he was so very sorry, he thought he must keep his words and oaths like a gentleman; for such is the excuse and explanation usually offered. He did not want to break faith with the young lady by slighting her, by treating the matter as a joke. And so the ghastly spectacle was enacted to the bitter end. There was an officer at the king's court who combined in his person the work of a courier, police officer, and executioner. To him the king's command went to furnish the head of John the Baptist. And, the execution having been performed in prison, the head of John was brought on a platter, as by the request of the dancer, and she, having formally received it, brought, it to her mother. There was nothing for the disciples of John to do but to come and lay his body into a grave, mourning bitterly meanwhile the untimely end of one of the greatest prophets that ever spoke the Word of God.

"What here is related of the court and court life of King Herod is a faithful picture of the world, of the life of the world, and of the lust of the world. The smooth, pliant children of the world are for the most part, even when they pretend to be honorable, what Herod and Herodias were, harlots and adulterers, and if not murderers, yet thieves, deceivers, perjurers, etc. But the chief sin of the world is this, that she will not listen to admonition, that she spurns the Word of God, and is angry against those that warn her against destruction and perdition. Wherever the world, even the apparently decent, cultured, fashionable world, celebrates her festivals, there the delights of feasting, of reveling and drunkenness, are indulged in, there one finds swearing, blaspheming, cursing, there gambling and dancing and rioting are the order of the day, and wine and passion inflame heart and mind. There a dissolute, godless conduct is in evidence, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. And the end of the wild delight and joy is often murder, the shedding of blood, and other great shame and vice."26) On the other hand, there is a lesson for the faithful believers in this story. "Therefore let no one have a terror concerning suffering and cross. Let no one envy the persecutors of the Gospel that they are enjoying honors, are great and mighty. For cross and suffering is the only way by which thou shalt come to the heritage and the kingdom of Christ; and all saints, and Christ Himself, have gone this way. Who, then, would be terrorized and complain about it? And it will be seen how quickly the change will come for the tyrants, that their suffering will come upon them in due time and finally last in eternity. From this may God mercifully keep us, and rather let us, with the sainted John the Baptist, suffer all manner of ignominy and disgrace, that we may but come to the kingdom of God; as our Lord Christ says that it is appointed to us, as to Him, cross and suffering." 27)

The return of the apostles: V. 30. **And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.** V. 31. **And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.** V. 32. **And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.** While the apostles made their first independent preaching-trip, the Lord Himself had not been idle. He had continued His journey in the company of other disciples, and He always had an audience wherever He came. But at the time when Herod had heard of Jesus and had been reminded of that unpleasant incident in his life, the apostles returned to their Master. As they had gone out two by two, so they now came together from various directions once more. They reported on all their work, especially also upon their preaching. Note: They were weary from the arduous labor which the task of preaching and the accompanying pastoral work involves, and the fact that Herod had deigned to take notice, while not a reason for flight, yet may be a secondary consideration to the Lord, not so much on His own account as on account of His disciples. And so He suggested a rest, a vacation, in some place away from the haunts of men, for many people were going to and fro; as one crowd left, another arrived; and the Lord and His disciples did not even have leisure for eating. And so they managed to get away by themselves in a ship, all alone. Here is an instance of the loving care of the Lord for His servants. His solicitude is for their bodies also, lest the strain of continuous work make them unfit for the greatest work of all, that of preaching the Gospel—a hint to be noted in its real significance by congregations and pastors alike.

Feeding of Five Thousand Men. Mark 6, 33-44.

The eagerness of the people: V. 33. **And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him.** V. 34. **And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things.** Jesus actually managed to get away in a boat alone with His disciples; but His embarking was nevertheless witnessed by some people, and His identity was too well known in the district, probably the neighborhood of Bethsaida. Besides, they noted and drew correct conclusions as to the course which they were taking in their boat, and the part of the country toward which they were heading. And the news was rapidly passed along the line. While Jesus, therefore, was slowly sailing across the sea, the multitude, swelled by additional inquisitive people from the cities on the northwest shore, made the trip around the north side of the lake afoot, a distance of some ten miles. They walked very rapidly; they ran together, and came ahead of them; they beat them to their destination. Curiosity, for the most part; what an immense factor in the destiny of individuals and of nations! And so it happened that when Jesus went out of the ship, He saw a great multitude gathered together awaiting Him. He did not stop to analyze the motives that might have prompted these people to come out into the uninhabited country; His Savior's heart felt only the deepest pity for them. They were as sheep without shepherds. In all the synagogues of Galilee there were rabbis and scribes, but the food which they supplied to their congregations was a diluted pap and treacle of the matter which the Jerusalem schools were teaching the young theologians. The people were in a state of greatest spiritual neglect. And so the great Friend of sinners forgot His own weariness, His urgent need of rest, and He began a long sermon to them. He taught them many things, things that pertained to their salvation.

Testing the disciples: V. 35. **And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed.** V. 36. **Send them away that they may go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.** V. 37. **He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?** V. 38. **He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and**

two fishes. In this story, as in many others, the Holy Spirit has permitted the evangelist to record such parts of the conversation as he remembered. The hour had advanced very far, it was late in the day, when the disciples thought it their duty to interfere and to remind the Master of the necessity of taking care of the body also. There is a certain amount of impatience contained in the address to Jesus: The place is uninhabited, and the hour is advanced. He should dismiss them; they could go to the farmhouses and the little villages situated within a radius of a few miles and buy themselves something to eat. Jesus takes the opportunity of testing their trust in His ability to help in this emergency. He urges them to take care of the unbidden guests; by skilful questioning He brings out the fact that they have been figuring the number of loaves that might be bought for two hundred denarii (between thirty-three and thirty-four dollars) , that they have found the provisions on hand to amount to five loaves of bread and two fish. The concern of the disciples at the inquiry of Jesus is illuminating as showing the weakness of their faith.

The feeding: V. 39. **And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.** V. 40. **And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.** V. 41. **And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He Looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all.** V. 42. **And. they did. all eat and were filled.** V. 43. **And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.** V. 44. **And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.** Nothing could be more expressive than the contrast afforded here between the helpless pattering of the disciples and the cool, majestic bearing of Christ in taking charge of the situation. He had the disciples give orders that all should recline on the grass in orderly groups, for just at this place there was a meadow near the shore of the lake. And they sat down in groups as in garden squares, as orderly as Rowers planted in rows a fine bit of vivid description. Then Jesus, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, and having looked up to heaven, spoke the blessing upon the food. Note: He broke the bread and passed it on for distribution; He divided the fishes and had them taken to all in a similar way; under His hands the amount of food grew. The miracle is mentioned by all four evangelists, and was one that could not be counterfeited, a secret supply being out of the question. It is a full proof for the divinity of Christ. All ate, and all had enough to eat. And not only that: when the fragments were gathered into the large carrying baskets used by the people of Palestine, twelve of these were filled. And the number of those that had eaten is expressly stated, it being so easy to count them as they sat in groups: five thousand men, without women and children.

Christ Walking on the Sea and His Return to Galilee. Mark 6; 45-56.

The dismissal of the disciples and the people: V. 45. **And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people.** V. 46. **And when He had sent them away, He departed into, a mountain to pray.** He constrained, He urged, He almost forced His disciples to embark into their boat again. They were loath to leave after this glorious exhibition of divine power, and they may have been truly solicitous for His welfare in the face of the unremitting labor which He was performing. But His will prevailed; they must try to cross over the lake to Bethsaida, probably that on the northwest shore of the sea. His next task was to dismiss the people, who may have been just as unwilling to go, as John reports, but were also sent home. When the majesty of His divinity shone through His mortal frame, then there was no questioning Christ's power, and there was no denying Him obedience. And now, being all alone, Jesus took the opportunity to pray to His heavenly Father. On the hill overlooking the lake, in the darkness and loneliness, He poured out His heart and obtained new strength from above. In many a difficult position, in many a hard problem, before many a bitter experience, the best way, the surest method of getting the necessary strength is to bring it to the Lord in prayer.

Jesus walking on the sea: V. 47. **And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and**

He alone on the land. V. 48. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them. And about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. V. 49. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea; they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out; V. 50. for they all saw Him and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. V. 51. And He went up unto them into the ship ; and the wind ceased. And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. V. 52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened. In the late afternoon the disciples had left the eastern shore, and when night came on, they had not yet crossed the lake, for they were obliged to battle with contrary winds. And He alone was on the land. He knew their plight; He was with them every inch of the way; but He did nothing to help them. It is often good for the believers to be buffeted by adverse winds of life. It is only by overcoming difficulties and by conquering in the hard places that Christian character is formed. Until the fourth watch of the night, according to Roman reckoning, between three o'clock in the morning and sunrise, He prayed, although the eye of His omniscience and the reassurance of His omnipresence was with them during all these hours. But now He came walking on the water as man otherwise steps along on dry land, He, the Master of all creation, that can make all things serve His will. He was about to pass by the boat, when the disciples saw Him. And then ensued a time of panic. Superstition, the fear of ghosts and specters, was still living in their hearts. And so the unwonted appearance of a human figure striding along over the waves set them to crying and wondering and fearing. But His voice stayed the panic and slowly brought confidence into their hearts. He then climbed over the side of the boat into their midst, whereupon the wind immediately stopped. The effect of this double miracle on the disciples, wrought up as they had been by their fear, was such as to bring them almost out of their senses for astonishment. For, as the evangelist here confesses, doubtless at the suggestion of Peter, the miracle of the loaves had not been understood by them, it had not entered into their hearts, its meaning had escaped them, and their hearts were still far from being in a condition to accept, at their right value, the miracles of the Lord. In like manner, the great deeds of the Lord which pass review before us in Scriptures often do not make the impression upon our hearts that they should; but the Savior has much patience with us, renewing and repeating His teaching until we understand.

New work for the Lord: V. 53. **And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. V. 54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him. V. 55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. V. 56. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole.** On the western shore of the lake there was a region, Gennesaret, "the garden of the prince," or the "garden of fertility," a rich and beautiful country. Here they cast anchor or fastened their boat. But no sooner had Jesus stepped to the shore than He was recognized by some of the people living in that neighborhood, and there was a repetition of former experiences. They ran throughout the region and spread the news of His coming. And now the sick were brought to Him. Also, whether He walked along city streets or country lanes, the relatives of the sick, undiscouraged and unwearied, brought their unfortunate ones with the plea that they might touch but the border of His garment. As once before, chapter 3, 10, He permitted the mere touch of His garment to work the miracle of healing. The people were worked up to the highest pitch of excitement at this time, which may have been augmented by the news of the miraculous feeding brought back by those that had been present upon that occasion. His sympathy and mercy were tireless in the interest of suffering humanity, but He was always concerned most about their souls, which He fed with the bread of life unto salvation.

Summary. *Jesus makes a visit to Nazareth. sends out the twelve apostles, while His fame spreads to Herod, who had caused the execution of John the Baptist; He seeks rest, but is prevented by a great*

multitude of five thousand, whom He feeds in the wilderness; He walks on the sea and performs many miracles of healing in the region of Gennesaret.

MARK CHAPTER 7.
[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Concerning Ceremonial Washings. Mark 7, 1-13.

The Pharisees find fault: V. 1. **Then came together unto Him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.** V. 2. **And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.** V. 3. **For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.** V. 4. **And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.** V. 5. **Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?** An instance of typical pharisaic pedantry, of deliberate, unwarranted faultfinding. Jesus had returned to Capernaum for a few days after the exciting and wearying experiences of a strenuous week. Here He finds a company of His enemies assembled; the contrast between the Lord's popularity during the last few days and the hostility of the Jewish religious leaders is brought out very strongly. It may be that this delegation of Pharisees and scribes was the same one that was dogging Christ's footsteps since the casting out of devils, chapter 3, 22; or the authorities may have sent down even more learned and disputatious men than at first, as they were learning to respect the clear arguments and the sharp tongue of the Galilean Rabbi. The purpose of their coming was frankly not to hear the Word of Life, but to provoke disputes. Their opportunity came very soon. They saw some of Christ's disciples eat with common, with unwashed hands. This was their cue for an attack upon Jesus. Note: Not the question of sanitation caused them concern, but one which they considered affecting the standing of a believing Jew in the sight of God. Mark explains the difficulty on account of his Roman readers. It was the custom of the Pharisees and of all the strict Jews that observed the traditions of the elders religiously to perform certain washings, especially before partaking of food. The original purpose of this precept had undoubtedly been to promote sanitary conditions among the Jews, a fact which often shielded them against epidemics," But the Pharisees and elders at the time of Jesus emphasized such outward observances to the detriment and exclusion of the more important things, the factors of real religion. They washed their hands most diligently before eating, with their fists, to insure thoroughness or to prevent the soiling of one hand from the palm of the other. They were careful, at the same time, to have the washing extend at least to the wrist, according to others to the elbow. It must be vigorous and thorough, and be done just so, otherwise a person became guilty of not clinging firmly to the tradition of the elders, a most heinous offense in the sight of the orthodox Pharisee. When coming back from market especially, where they might unknowingly have touched something unclean, the strict Jews were most inexorable and oppressive in their demands for cleanliness, a thorough washing of the hands and arms, if not of the whole body, being a prime requisite at that time. This care had become so excessive that it extended to the dishes and the furniture of the house as a matter of Levitical purification. They had received, and adhered most firmly to, the tradition regarding the washing of drinking-cups, of wooden and brazen vessels, and even of couches or sofas. The word used here for utensils of brass is really a Latin word, meaning a Roman measure equal to about 1 1/2 pints. Earthen vessels are not mentioned, since they had to be broken if defiled, Lev. 15, 12. Thus the whole life of the Jews, down to the most minute performances of every-day life, was governed by such laws and precepts. Having explained the Jewish custom, Mark returns to his story. The Pharisees attack Jesus, finding fault both with His disciples and therefore with Him for

transgressing the traditions of the elders, which were thus represented as just as sacred and inviolable as the commandments of God.

The Lord's answer: V. 6. **He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.** V. 7. **Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** V. 8. **For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do.** In cases of weakness and lack of understanding the Lord was always willing to employ a great deal of patience, but in the case of the Pharisees, where utter hardness of heart was united with supercilious haughtiness and unwillingness to be taught, Jesus used the weapons of invective and sarcasm, and sometimes of bitter denunciation. He applies a double prophecy of Isaiah to them, chapter 29, 13. With their lips they honored the Lord, endless prayers with babbling repetition were their strong suit, but their heart was altogether away, at a great distance from Him. They were proud of their outward observance of the precepts of both the Law and of the tradition of the elders, believing that this was true service of God. But vain is such worship, the Lord informs them, since they teach and insist upon the doctrines of men. In accordance with this prophecy, Jesus fitly calls them hypocrites, actors of a kind, that go through the routine of their part, say their prayers, and make the appropriate gestures by rote, but who seldom or never can reach the spontaneous expression of one that speaks and acts out of the fullness of his heart. Like them, all people that place the commandments of men on the same level with God's holy Law and for the sake of their precepts change and even set aside the eternal Word of God, are hypocrites, whose heart is far from God, who do not give the Lord their heart, for otherwise they would have the proper reverence for the same. The rebuke of Jesus exactly strikes the sore spot: they put aside the command of God and cling to the tradition of men.

The attack of Christ: V. 9. **And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the command of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.** V. 10. **For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father and mother, let him die the death.** V. 11. **But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free.** V. 12. **And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother;** V. 13. **making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye.** Having defended Himself successfully and silenced His detractors, the Lord now assumes the offensive. He employs pointed sarcasm: It is a fine way in which you frustrate the commandment of God that your tradition may be upheld! The Pharisees not only placed the precepts of tradition on the same level with those of God, but by their peculiar emphasis upon them actually set the latter aside. An example of this irreverent and blasphemous method: setting aside the Fourth Commandment for the sake of a probable sacrifice. God's Law is clear on the relation of children to parents, Ex. 20, 12; Deut. 5, 16, also regarding the punishment of those that disregard the rights of the parents, Ex. 21, 17; Lev. 20, 9. He had placed the service to parents next to that of Himself. But the Pharisees took advantage of the fact that God had sanctioned free-will offerings or sacrifices. They taught: If a man says to his father or his mother, Corban, that is, a free-will gift, let that be what you would have from me for your benefit or help. The final understanding of the expression came to be: if a son or daughter took the money, the goods, the earnings, the means, with which he could and should assist his poor and needy parents, and dedicated it to God as a sacrifice or free-will offering for the Temple, he did well. The Pharisees held the mere making of such a vow, the mere use of the expression Corban, for a service done to God, which could very well take precedence of the service due to parents. In doing so, they set aside even the plain truth of the Old Testament, Prov. 28, 24. The result of such teaching soon became evident: The honor due to parents was forgotten, the fact that they were God's substitutes was disregarded. Thus they literally set at naught the Word of God, and such instances could be multiplied. That was Christ's attack, one that showed the real relation of values.

Christ's Denunciation of the Pharisees. Mark 7, 14-23.

Addressing the people: V. 14. **And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Harken unto Me, every one of you, and understand:** V. 15. **There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.** V. 16. **If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.** The question which had been broached by the Pharisees was by no means unimportant, if considered from the right angle and in the right connection. And Christ did not intend to be misunderstood by the people that had been interested witnesses of the encounter. Levitical impurity, ceremonial washings, they no longer have any value in the New Testament. But of far greater importance is spiritual impurity, whose nature a person should well understand, in order to strike at the root of the matter and stop the inclinations toward evil at the beginning. So Christ turns directly to the people; He calls the crowd to Him and addresses them all on this topic; He emphasizes the necessity of listening intently and intelligently, in order that they might understand. It is a sweeping statement: There is nothing outside of a person which may touch him or enter into him that can make him unclean, that will make him unfit for serving the Lord and taking part in His service. Christian worship and service is in no way dependent upon the outward appearance or habits of a person, whether he wears broadcloth or overalls, whether he washes his hands before meals or not, whether he eats certain foods or not. All these things are irrelevant and immaterial, so far as actual worshiping of the Lord is concerned. They may be watched for hygienic and sanitary reasons, just as we have good and laudable customs regarding our appearance at the house of God; but they do not concern the religion of a man, his relation to his God. But, Christ says, the things which come forth from the man, they are apt to make him unclean, they may disturb the confidence of the Lord in him, they may cause the relation between him and his God to be severed. It is an important point that the Lord here makes, and He wants to impress it upon His hearers.

The explanation to the disciples: V. 17. **And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.** V. 18. **And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; V. 19. because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? V. 20. And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. V. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, V. 22. thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: V. 23. all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.** The disciples had gotten into the habit of talking over the public teaching of the Lord, in order to find its true meaning, to get the full understanding. Here also they waited until Jesus came home with them, to the place where He, and, perhaps, they all were lodging at that time. Here they asked Him concerning this saying, which they call a parable, that is, in this case, an obscure saying, a comparison hard to understand. The evangelist notes the full speech of Jesus, in which He chode their lack of spiritual insight. Their stupidity is purposely made prominent, in order to bring out their need of instruction. Jesus here extends the saying, which before had touched only upon the moral sphere of man's life, in order to make His meaning still plainer. That which enters into the body from without, in the shape of food, cannot make him unclean morally or spiritually, it cannot affect the condition of his heart before God. Foods merely, generally speaking, influence the physical side of man. They are taken into the stomach, and finally the waste matter is thrown out by the body, thus actually purging the body of matter which might make him unclean. Thus Christ incidentally extended His saying concerning ceremonial uncleanness to abolishing the distinction maintained in the Old Testament concerning the cleanness and uncleanness of various foods. He practically declared all meats to be clean; the distinction which the Jews had so rigidly and rigorously observed was hereby abrogated for the New Testament.

But the lesson which Christ wanted to teach lay deeper; the physical side of the process touched upon by Him was only a side issue. That upon which all depends is the right attitude, the proper understanding of the things that go out from the body. From inside, from the heart, which is full of evil and inclined toward all evil by nature, come thoughts, desires, words, actions that defile the man. God looks into the heart. It is not only the actual sin which is culpable in His sight, but the very thoughts are bad, wrong, sinful before Him. And they all live in the heart: adulteries, open disruptions of the marriage-rights; thefts, the unlawful desire and gain of the neighbor's goods; murders, any thoughts or acts that make the neighbor's life unpleasant or destroy it; fornications, actual severing of the marriage-tie; covetousnesses, striving after goods that belong to the neighbor by God's gift or permission; wickednesses, all forms of evil dispositions; fraud, by which people try to get the best of their neighbor; debauchery, in which men serve their own bodies in a manner unbecoming Christians and human beings; an evil eye, jealousy, which begrudges the other person everything good; blasphemy, by which God is mocked and all that is holy is defiled; presumption, the lifting of one's self above the neighbor; lack of knowledge, moral foolishness. The seed, the germ of all these sins, lies in the heart of every man by nature, only awaiting the occasion when it will come forth and work havoc. These are the things that defile a person, but not any form of the so-called Levitical or ceremonial uncleanness. A Christian has need to watch over his heart unceasingly, lest any of these evil seeds sprout and grow beyond all control.

The Syrophenician Woman. Mark 7, 24-30.

A journey to the North: V. 24. **And from thence He arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it. But He could not be hid; V. 25. for a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet. V. 26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.** Since it was apparently impossible to find rest and leisure for connected teaching in the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus arose from there, from the city, Capernaum, where He had had the encounter with the Pharisees. There came a period of wandering far from the usual haunts, of going away with the intention of staying away for some time. Cp. 10, 1. He proceeded into the neighborhood, into the region of Tyre, into the country between Tyre and Sidon. Although the former country of Phoenicia, since the conquest by Pompey, belonged to Syria, there was little intercourse between this country and Palestine and little love lost between their inhabitants. Into this country Jesus went with His disciples, not for the purpose of carrying on the labors of His ministry, but to gain time for the necessary intercourse with His disciples, since their theological training was far from complete, as the recent incident showed. He wanted to remain unknown in this distant region... But it was impossible for Him to carry out His program as planned, for His fame had preceded Him, probably by means of the people that had gone down to see Him during His Galilean tour, chapter 3, 8. There was also a caravan road from Galilee, and the news concerning the Galilean Prophet might easily have traveled along with the merchants. He could not remain hidden, though He entered and perhaps stayed for awhile in a house of that region. Very soon a woman heard of His presence in the neighborhood who had great need of His help. Though she was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race, she had become acquainted with the hopes and expectations of the Jews, and for her own person had come to the conclusion that this man was the Lord, the Messiah, that had been promised to the Jewish people. Now her young daughter had an unclean, an evil spirit, she was a demoniac, and her mother determined to appeal to Christ for help. To be sure of the identity of Jesus as the true Helper in every trouble, to trust in His willingness to help, and to ask assistance and the fulfillment of every need from Him alone, that is the essence of faithful trust. She came to Jesus, she fell down at His feet in the attitude of worshipful appeal; she pleaded with Him to have sympathy with her and her small daughter, to heal the child of her terrible affliction.

The victory of faith: V. 27. **But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.** V. 28. **And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.** V. 29. **And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.** V. 30. **And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.** Mark gives the story in a very brief form, merely indicating the battle which the woman fought in proving herself equal to the test of faith which Jesus laid upon her. Christ was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 15, 24; His personal ministry extended no farther, and He frankly told the woman so. Neither could the impatient interference of the disciples induce Him to change His mind, Matt. 15, 21-28. But the woman's method of attacking Christ and taking hold of His own words in her interest won the day for her. When He told her: Let the children have their food first; it isn't a nice thing to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, she acknowledged and admitted the truth of that saying without reservation. She stood the blow in a splendid manner, as Luther says. She was ready to concede to the Jews the right of being children of God, His chosen nation. But she marked well that Jesus used the word that was usually applied to the privileged house-dogs, that had the right to gather up the crumbs under the table. Upon this word she pounces, to that she clings: Yes, Lord. In spite of the fact that He had apparently rejected her and her petition, though there seemed no ray of hope in His manner nor in His words, she found the one place where He had left an opening: And yet the little house-dogs under the table eat of the crumbs of the children; if Thou thinkest the comparison fits, Lord, I do not question it; rather do I count myself lucky that this word includes a promise for me, the promise to receive the crumbs which the Jews, in the richness of the ministry being done among them, will never miss. Thus did this heathen woman give evidence of a conquering faith, in overcoming Christ with His own arguments. And Jesus, ever delighted over any show of true trust and faith in Him, gladly yields to her request, for the sake of that word of humble trust, of sublime assurance which she hath spoken. Let her therefore go home happy, for the demon had already gone forth out of her daughter. And so she found the situation when she came to her house: the daughter, whom the evil spirit had formerly tormented and torn in the most excruciating manner, now lying quietly on the couch, with no more indication of her former suffering. Her faith had won the victory. We, who have much more definite promises of the Lord regarding our earthly and spiritual welfare, usually do not show even a fraction of the faith exhibited by the Syrophenician woman. It behooves us to be much more instant in prayer and, above all, much more persevering in our appeals to the grace and mercy of God, no matter what gifts we have in mind. We must learn to conquer the Lord with His own words and promises, then true happiness will be ours both here and hereafter.

Healing of the Deaf-and-Dumb. Mark 7, 31-37.

The return to Palestine: V. 31. **And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.** V. 32. **And they bring unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in His speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.** The story of this healing is one peculiar to the gospel of Mark. After His sojourn in Syrophenicia, in the region between Tyre and Sidon, Jesus did not take the direct route back to Galilee. It seems, from all accounts, that He went through the borders of Coele-Syria and Upper Galilee, perhaps along the river Leontes, and then came down from the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi through Gaulanitis into the region of the Decapolis. Concerning this journey of the Lord, which was perhaps the longest single journey which He made, we know nothing, since none of the evangelists or apostles give accounts of it. But we are undoubtedly not far wrong in saying that He employed the time in instructing His apostles in things which were so necessary for them in their divine calling. It was after Christ's return into the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee, in the region where, not so very long before, He had healed the demoniac, that they, his relatives or friends, brought to Him a man that was deaf and had a bad impediment in his speech. He may have been able to make sounds and even indicate

his wishes to people that watched him closely, but he could not articulate, his tongue was unable to form the words. It was a severe ailment, in which the extent of Satan's power is evident. "For that this poor man is hurt in this manner that he can use neither tongue nor ears, like other people, those are blows and thrusts of the accursed devil. Before the world it may seem, and everyone be of the opinion, that they be natural ailments; for the world does not know the devil that he does so much harm, makes the people mad and foolish, inflicts all manner of misfortune upon them, not only in the body, but also in the soul, that they die for terror and sorrow and cannot attain to true joy. But we Christians should deem such defects and infirmities nothing else but blows of the devil; he causes such distress on earth and does damage wherever he call." 28)

The healing: V. 33. **And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His: fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue;** V. 34. **and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.** V. 35. **And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.** V. 36. **And He charged them that they should tell no man; but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;** V. 37. **and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.** Mark gives a very circumstantial account of the healing, relating every detail, to let the healing sympathy and power of the Lord stand out all the more beautifully. For reasons which are not divulged, Jesus withdrew the sick man from the crowd. Due to his malady, the poor man was cut off almost entirely from communication with his fellow-men and had to be taken by the hand. This act of Jesus, whom the man could see, served to awaken his attention, to make him mark closely all that Jesus did with him, for only through signs could Jesus communicate with him. The Lord then put one finger of His right hand into one of the man's ears, and one of the left hand into the other. The deafness was the most deep-seated evil; by touching the atrophied organs, the Lord transmitted to them His healing power. He next moistened His finger at His mouth and touched the tongue of the sick man. The tongue and the inner ears were the diseased organs. "He refers especially to these two members, ears and tongue; for the kingdom of Christ is based upon the Word, which cannot otherwise be grasped or understood but through these two members, ears and tongue, and it reigns only through the Word and faith in the hearts of men. The ears take hold of the Word, and the heart believes it; but the tongue speaks and confesses, as the heart believes. Therefore if the tongue and the ears are removed, there is no noticeable difference between the kingdom of Christ and the world...With us, thanks to God, the tongue has gotten so far that we speak plainly, for there are everywhere pious people that hear the Word of God with desire. But aside from this there is also great ingratitude and terrible contempt for the Word of God, yea, secret persecution and secret suffering.... That is an indication that the Word of God is despised and that people are secretly hostile to it; as we see that things usually go: where the Word is openly persecuted, there it insists on being; but where it is free and in open use, there people do not want it." 29) After these preparatory acts Jesus looked up to heaven and sighed. He felt the deepest sympathy for the unfortunate sufferer; His miracles never degenerated into a mere business. Incidentally, we see that the works of healing meant a great mental strain for Christ. And at last He spoke the Aramaic word: Ephphatha, which Mark translates for his readers: Be opened. The result: The hearings, the instruments of hearing, the ears, were opened, were put into commission again, and the fetters that bound his tongue were loosed; whereas he could formerly merely make sounds, he could now articulate distinctly and speak plainly. "The phrase used by Mark is one often used, in the magical texts, and shows that the writer of the gospel supposed that in this miracle demoniac fetters were broken and a work of Satan undone." 30)

Here also the sequel was much as in other cases: Jesus impressed upon them that they should not tell of the miracle. He did not want to be drawn into another ministry of healing. But they did just the opposite: so much the more, a great deal (double comparative), superabundantly, they proclaimed the miracle. For beyond all description they were astonished, in the highest degree they were

overwhelmed, saying: Well has He made everything. It seems that they had not only this miracle in mind, but the former one as well, which by Christ's own arrangement had been published so widely. "Therefore let us remember, and take heed of, this miracle, and follow the example of the pious people that praise Christ the Lord here that He had made all things well, that He makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. This He does, as stated before, forever within the Christian Church, by means of the Sacraments and through the public Word, that the ears of the deaf are opened, and that the dumb are made to speak. Through these means, and through nothing else, the Holy Spirit wants to perform His work in us. Mark that well and cling to it with greater diligence; for that is the nearest and surest way that our ears may be opened and our tongues loosed, and we be saved. May our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, grant us this! " 31)

Summary. *Jesus answers an attack of the Pharisees concerning ceremonial washing, denounces them for their disregard of the Word of God, explains moral cleanness, heals the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and opens the ears of the deaf-mute.*

MARK CHAPTER 8. [VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Feeding Four Thousand Men. Mark 8, 1-9.

The great need of the people: V. 1. **In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, V. 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; V. 3. and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from far.** Jesus was still in the region of the Decapolis, where He had healed the deaf-mute. It may have been due partly to the excitement over this miracle, partly to the preliminary work of the former demoniac, that the multitudes from these cities and their vicinity that swarmed to Jesus were continually on the increase. Again, as on previous occasions, much people was present. Some of them may have provided lunch for a day or two, but just now they had nothing to eat; they were in actual need of food. Jesus had not been idle during these days. Discourses on the kingdom of God alternated with miracles of mercy. The people had remained during all this time; in this case they were from the border country which was predominantly heathen, whereas in the former case He had had Galileans to deal with. There were always some hearts that were opened to the Gospel, and thus the compassion of Christ was not without reward.

But here was an emergency which threatened to become serious. Jesus determined to test His disciples, as once before, to see if they now had sufficient trust in His almighty power to help. Calling them to Him, He lays the situation before them. He had the deepest compassion on the people, since their perseverance and eagerness to hear and see Him had brought them into this unpleasant plight. The sympathy of the Redeemer had been enlisted, His heart went out to them, for He knew if He should dismiss them without food, many of them would be utterly exhausted and suffer severely with excessive fatigue, many of them having come from some distance. "See what a kind Christ we have, who cares also that He may preserve our disgraceful body. Here hope may revive and a person, through these words of Christ, be consoled, as He says: They lie there and wait for Me, even to the third day, so I must also give them enough. There you see that all who diligently adhere to the Word of God are fed by God Himself; for that is the manner and power of faith, which flows from the Word of God alone. Therefore, dear friends, let us finally begin to believe; for only unbelief is the cause of all sin and vice that are now spreading in all stations. Why is it that there are everywhere so many foolish women and scoundrels, also so many land-swindlers, thieves, robbers, usurers, murderers, and sellers of incumbencies? All this follows unbelief. For such people judge only according to human reason; but

reason judges according to that which it sees; and what it cannot see it does not like to understand; therefore, since it does not place its trust in God by faith, it must despair in itself, and thus produce knaves and scoundrels. Note: Thus it goes where the people let their reason reign instead of faith.... Such counseling and talking with the disciples is done in the first place for this reason, that the heart and the thoughts be revealed. For it cannot remain hidden and lie secret in His heart that He has compassion on the people, but it must be brought to the light of day that it may be seen and heard, and we learn to believe that we have the same Christ that is cordially concerned about our distress, also that of the body, and who always shows the words: I have compassion on the multitude, which are written in His heart with living letters, also in deed and in work. And He would also like to have us know this and hear the Word of the Gospel in such a way as though He were still talking to us in this hour and every day, whenever we feel our trouble, yea, long before we begin to complain concerning it. For He still is and will ever remain the same Christ, and He has the same heart, thoughts, and words toward us, that He was and had at that time, and neither yesterday nor ever has He changed, nor will He become a different Christ to-day or to-morrow. Thus there stands here a picture or board on which the depth of His heart is painted, for He is a faithful, merciful Lord, whom the knowledge of our trouble affects deeply, and He looks more deeply into it than we dare to pray or bring before Him. Woe upon the disgrace of our disagreeable unbelief, that we hear and see these things and yet find it so difficult to trust in Him!" 34)

The miracle: V. 4. **And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?** V. 5. **And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.** V. 6. **And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.** V. 7. **And they had a few small fishes; and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.** V. 8. **So they did eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.** V. 9. **And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and He sent them away.** The disciples again failed in the test proposed to them by the Lord, whether from diffidence or from hardness of heart cannot be determined. Instead of reminding Him in joyful faith of the former feeding at a place only a few miles away, they begin to cast about for a solution of the difficulty, in utter helplessness: Whence will any one find it possible, here in the wilderness, to supply all these men with bread? There were, in this case, not even villages or towns within easy reach where supplies might be gotten. It is a question which has been repeated in countless variations since that time. "The apostles also worry, but in a far different way than Christ; they say: Whence can we obtain bread here in the wilderness to satisfy them? That is worrying; but this worrying does not help the matter. But, on the other hand, when Christ takes up the matter of the people and plans about getting them something to eat, though there are only seven loaves there and a little fish, it still proves sufficient for four thousand men, and seven baskets of fragments remain.... How is it, then, that we, who are all Christians or want to be considered such, do not follow this example, neither comfort ourselves with our fullness and surplus, but are terrorized on account of want, and begin to worry on its account? For if we adhere to the Word of God diligently and faithfully, there will be no want; Christ will take care of us, and it must follow that we shall have enough to eat. For it does not depend upon how much or how little we have, but upon His blessing. If He adds that to the small store that thou hast, this will not only not dissolve, but on account of His blessing there will be added to it and be more there than in the beginning." 35) In this case the disciples had a supply of seven loaves, very likely the bread for their own use. Jesus now took charge of the banquet which He wanted to prepare for the multitude. He bade them all cast themselves down on the ground. The inviting grass of the former miracle seems to have been absent in this case. He then proceeded as before. Taking the seven loaves and having spoken a blessing over them, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute among the people. Note : Christ never began a meal without remembering the thanks due to

the Giver of all good gifts and asking His blessing upon the food. "Here He teaches first that we should use what God gives us, no matter how little it is, and accept it with thanksgiving, and know that Christ also wants to bless it that it may prosper and suffice, yea, even grow under our hands; for that is well-pleasing to Him when His gifts are acknowledged and thanks returned for them, and He adds His blessing that this prospers better and reaches farther than great riches and superfluous goods of the unbelievers, as also the Scripture says, Ps. 37, 16; Prov. 10, 22; 1 Tim. 6, 6. For, what have they that possess many and great goods without faith and Christ, and what do they gain? They only deprive themselves of God and of His blessing, are idolaters, the captives of mammon, that dare not make use of their own goods nor let others use it, or they do not use it with a good conscience, neither are they happy over the bite that they eat on account of their avarice and bad conscience, in which they have only one thought, to scrape together more and more with all manner of bad deals and schemes, and yet must always be worrying and in danger that they will have no peace before God and the people, must hear and see much and experience things that make their heart sick, in their great possessions and in their own children; and thus they have thrown themselves into the bonds of the devil and pierced themselves through with many sorrows, as the apostle says, from which they cannot escape." 36) As Jesus was breaking the bread and dividing the little fish that had been found among the supplies, the food grew under His hand. As often as the disciples returned for more, so often could He offer it to them, and they, in turn, passed it to the people. So they all partook of the meal, and they all had their fill to eat; not one was obliged to remain hungry, though there were four thousand men that had enjoyed Christ's hospitality. And again the Lord, in the spirit of food conservation which is advocated throughout Scriptures, had the multitude gather up the remainders of the broken pieces, which could well be used for food, and they filled seven large baskets of the kind that were used in that country for carrying large loads on the back. It is not stated whether the people knew the manner in which they were fed on this occasion, nor what effect the knowledge had upon them, if they knew. And even the disciples remained comparatively callous, as the Lord soon had occasion to find out. If people let the constant repetition of the great miracles of Christ in the means of grace deaden their sensibilities, they are working great harm to themselves; the compassion, the mercy, the faithfulness of the Lord is new every morning.

The Leaven of the Pharisees. Mark 8, 10-21.

Request for a sign from heaven: V. 10. **And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.** V. 11. **And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting him.** V. 12. **And He sighed deeply in His spirit and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.** V. 13. **And He left them, and, entering into the ship, again departed to the other side.** After the miracle of the feeding Jesus lost no time in further teaching and healing at this place. Without delay He entered the boat with His disciples and crossed the Sea of Galilee into the region of Dalmanutha, in the district of Magdala, Matt. 15, 39. This was a fertile district adjoining that of Gennesaret, and for that reason settled very thickly. Jesus always returned to Galilee for short trips, but the day of mercy for the Galileans had practically come to a close. His ancient enemies had not returned to Jerusalem, to all appearances. For no sooner had He begun the work of His ministry than they came out, probably from Capernaum. They here deliberately began a dispute, they tried to force the issue, they tempted Him. Their object was to get Him to do or say something that could be readily construed as being at variance with the Law of Moses. They hoped to gain their purpose in this case by having Him show a sign from heaven, a sign establishing His claim as the Messiah sent by God. They were not sincere in their urgent demand; they had no intention of believing on Him. If He had fulfilled their request, they would simply have denounced Him before the people as a false Messiah, in spite of all. The wickedness and hypocrisy of the question affected the Lord very deeply. He fetched a deep sigh in His spirit. He realized that the crisis had come, that

henceforth there would be enmity to death against Him on the part of these members of the leading party in the Jewish Church. Then He said the solemn words, in the form of an oath: What sign does this generation seek? Verily I say unto you, if a sign will be given to this generation! This is an Aramaic form of speaking, leaving the sentence unfinished, the alternative unspoken. It is the strongest form of refusal. In their sense Jesus here and always refused them a sign. If the many miracles that had been performed in the presence of multitudes numbering thousands had made no impression on them, neither would some manifestation out of the sky penetrate their callous hearts. One sign He indeed is reserving for them and for the whole world, Matt. 12, 38-40, a sign so wonderful that they would never understand, much less accept and believe it - His resurrection from the dead. Having given the Pharisees this answer, He left them, and again crossed to the other side of the sea. The obstinacy and hardness of heart which these enemies exhibited hurt Him deeply, and so He wanted to be alone for awhile and gain strength for further labors and combats.

The disciples' worry about bread: **V. 14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. V. 15. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod. V. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.** The departure from the region of Dalmanutha or Magdala had been very hurried. Their course was directed to a country which did not offer much in the form of food. A single loaf, probably one left over from the previous day, was all the provisions the disciples had in the boat. Note: The Lord literally lived up to the precept He had given that the believers should take no thought for the morrow, just as He had taught them to pray for the food which was enough for this day, which would sustain life till the next morning. But that one lonely loaf of bread was on the mind of the disciples like a heavy load. Jesus, meanwhile, was concerned about much more important things. The encounter with the Pharisees had given Him food for anxious thought with regard to His disciples. Here was a real danger menacing His disciples and the believers of all times. And so He turned to His fellow-passengers and charged them, gave them the earnest precept to keep their eyes open, to watch, to beware against the leaven of the Pharisees and also that of Herod. It was a figurative, proverbial saying, which was in general use among the Jews, since they often applied this word to something foreign to a substance, something that might cause fermentation and rotting, 1 Cor. 5, 6. "With this expression something should be indicated that in itself is small and insignificant, but when mixed with other things exerts a most extensive influence, which can scarce be resisted. The Lord warns against the pharisaic and Herodianic leaven. Theirs is a hypocritical manner, that emphasizes the external appearance, that pretends to be strict in worship and yet transgresses and sets aside God's commandments; their blindness in spiritual things should be indicated, which they gloss over with a show of sanctity. Before one is aware of it, the whole heart is filled with it, even if one has made only the slightest concession. But just as earnestly the Lord feels constrained to warn against the leaven of Herod. This reigning family professed adherence to the tenets of the Jewish Church, but its members drove out the devil of Pharisaism with an equally wicked devil; they wanted to introduce among the Jews the heathenish, loose, dissolute life, of which we had an example in the birthday festival of Herod Antipas. Instead of a hypocritical religion they introduced the religion of the flesh. Also in this respect the disciples of Christ must beware of the slightest beginnings." 37)

But the disciples were as dense as usual. They received the charge in silence and then talked the matter over among themselves quietly, lest the Master should hear. The conclusion they arrived at was this, that the words of the Lord were a reprimand because they had neglected to bring enough bread along. That one fact was worrying them. And, like them, the believers of all times find it very hard to separate their minds from the cares of this life. Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, was with them in the boat, but that did not reassure the disciples. He is with us just as surely, according to His promise, even though His physical, visible presence has been withdrawn, but our hearts are usually just as badly beset by our concern for daily food.

The reproof of Christ: V. 17. **And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened?** V. 18. **Having eyes, see ye not, and having ears, hear ye not, and do ye not remember?** V. 19. **When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve.** V. 20. **And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.** V. 21. **And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?** Jesus had been busy with His thoughts, but His attention was now directed to His disciples by their whispering and consulting. And, without inquiring, by virtue of His omniscience, He knew the matter of their dispute and their conclusion. That was a worse blow than the enmity of the Pharisees. He gives utterance to a sharp reprimand in the form of a bitter complaint: Why are you consulting together about loaves which you have not? Not yet do you know or understand? Yet have you a heart that is calloused? Having eyes you see not, and having ears you hear not, and do not remember? It was lack of faith, lack of trust in Him, which was evident in the case of the disciples, as if there were nothing higher to be thought of than bread. They were almost on a level with the Jews to whom the Lord had applied the word of Isaiah concerning the hardness of their hearts. But, after all, it was only weakness, and not malice, in their case. And so the Lord uses a gentler tone in reminding them of the two great miracles of feeding which they had witnessed. He comes to their assistance by catechizing them on these exhibitions of divine power, to see whether they had taken proper note of all incidents. This they had remembered and answered correctly. And now He again urges them to consider the matter once more, very carefully, and see whether they could not reach the right conclusion. And this time they understood what He had referred to and what He wanted to teach, Matt. 16, 12.

The Blind Man of Bethsaida. Mark 8, 22-26.

V. 22. **And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him.** V. 23. **And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw aught.** V. 24. **And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking.** V. 25. **After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.** V. 26. **And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.** This is the second miracle whose account is peculiar to Mark, and he relates it in just the same circumstantial, detailed way as the other, 7, 31-36. Jesus had crossed the sea with His disciples and landed on the northeast shore. Here, on the east side of the river Jordan, just where it flows into the Sea of Galilee, was the city of Bethsaida-Julias. Philip, the tetrarch of Gaulanitis, had built this city on the site of a former village and had called it, in honor of the daughter of the emperor, Bethsaida-Julias, to distinguish it from the other Bethsaida, on the western shore of the lake. Even in this neighborhood, where the Lord had probably never been for any length of time, His fame had preceded Him. They, the relatives or friends, brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him earnestly that He should touch him, having confidence that a mere touch of His hand would make him whole, restore his sight. The Lord wanted no publicity; He had come for the purpose of being alone with His disciples. So He took the blind man's hand and led him out of the village or city. Probably only His disciples were present. Having moistened the dead eyes with some spittle, He laid His hands on him, on his eyes, and then asked him whether he could see. The eyesight had been restored to some extent, so that the blind man could now see objects in indistinct, blurred outlines. But a second laying on of hands corrected this defect, enabling him to see things clearly, since he was now restored to the proper use of his sight. He could see all things sharply defined and standing out clearly. The miracle had returned the full use of his dead members to him. The reason for this gradual healing, that the blind man first looked up in the tentative manner peculiar to the blind, then saw things through a mist, and finally was fully restored, is not indicated. It should impress upon all Christian the great value of the sense of sight and of all senses, so that they appreciate and use them properly, never forgetting to give thanks to the Giver of all good

gifts for them. In order to avoid a sensation, Jesus did not permit the man to return to his house, nor even to go into the city. He wanted to continue the work for which He had left Galilee.

Jesus the Christ and His Service. Mark 8, 27-38.

A journey to the heathen country: V. 27. **And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea-Philippi; and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? V. 28. And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.** Jesus now at last got the opportunity for which He had been waiting and planning for some time. His work was to instruct His disciples more fully in the essentials of their calling, for this preparation was sorely needed. Leaving Bethsaida-Julias, they traveled northward by easy stages, until they came into the vicinity, into the suburbs of Caesarea-Philippi. They were now in the province of Gaulanitis, or Auranitis, in which Philip was tetrarch. Caesarea was its capital. It had been built on the site of the former village Pallium, on the eastern slope of the Lebanon, near the source of the Jordan. Philip called the new city Caesarea, in honor of the emperor, but to distinguish it from the city of the same name on the western coast of Palestine, he added his own name as a distinguishing mark. The whole district was now known by this name. It was a beautiful and prosperous region, upon which the snow-covered peak of Hermon looked down. But the inhabitants were, for the most part, heathen. Jesus here had the leisure, as His little company slowly traveled along the highways, to impart to them some of the information which would later stand them in good stead. But He also took the opportunity to ask them questions concerning the knowledge they had gained, a method sure to be effective in the case of such a teacher. He asked them, in a preliminary way, what opinion the people, especially those of northern Palestine, of Galilee, and of the country west of the Jordan, had concerning Him. They answered Him according to the information they had. Many held the opinion that He was John the Baptist; others, that He was Elijah in a reincarnation; others, that He was one of the prophets. Cp. chapter 6, 14. 15.

The confession of Peter: V. 29. **And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ. V. 30. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.** The first answer had been given willingly enough, for the information could be easily supplied. But now Christ puts the direct question to all disciples, emphasizing the pronoun: How about you? What is your opinion and confession? Note: The words are spoken to all apostles, not to a single one, nor to a group; Jesus wanted a frank, clear statement of their belief. The answer of Peter, therefore, can be understood properly only in this sense, as a confession of them all: Thou art the Christ. They hereby declared it as their firm conviction that their Master was the promised Messiah, and ascribed to Him all the attributes with which the prophets had endowed this greatest prophet of all. The confession of Peter is the confession of all true believers of all times. The question, What think ye of Jesus? is the great test question of the ages. By his personal relation to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will the fate of every person be determined. It makes and posits the difference between believing Christians and unbelievers, the children of this world. People in general consider Christ a mere man, endowed, indeed, with many unusual virtues and with exceptional wisdom, but, after all, a mere man. But the Christians believe that this man is Jesus Christ, by God's counsel and will the Savior and Redeemer of the world, that He is true God, born of the Father from eternity. After commending the confession very highly, Jesus charged His disciples, He spoke in a tone of menace, almost threateningly, as if expecting foolish talk in this sacred matter, or to prevent the spread of false ideas regarding the work of the Messiah. For that in itself was the most difficult problem, to keep the disciples and others from indulging in all kinds of carnal hopes of a worldly empire, of a kingdom of this world. In our days such an objurgation would be needed with double emphasis, since the work of the millennialists is advancing rapidly and their literature is being spread broadcast over the country. We need no new Gospel, but we need the right, the simple understanding of the old Gospel, unclouded

and unspoiled by the dreams of men that have no proper conception either of the person or of the work of Christ.

The first announcement of the Passion: V. 31. **And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.** V. 32. **And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him.** V. 33. **But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.** Having accepted their confession and thus substantiated the same regarding His person and office, Jesus now took the opportunity to instruct them more fully in the knowledge of salvation. It was a new form of teaching which the Lord introduced at this point, no longer in parables, figures, and dark allusions and intimations, but with perfect freedom and openness. He, the Son of Man, *must* suffer much. That was the duty which He had taken upon Himself, the obligation which He had shouldered. This suffering is then analyzed. He would be rejected by the elders and by the high priests and by the scribes. It would finally narrow down to this: if the religious authorities would approve of Jesus as the Messiah and accept His teaching, the people would follow. But now it was a foregone conclusion that they would most emphatically disapprove of Him and His ministry. And so the result would follow very naturally: suffering, death, but also resurrection, a fact which the Jewish leaders did not take into account. All these predictions Jesus made with absolute frankness, keeping silence with regard to nothing. The word used here by the evangelist is one which is also fittingly applied to the work of the Christian ministry, 2 Cor. 3, 12. The sum and substance of Gospel-preaching is included in the statement of Christ and in the confession of the disciples. The telling of this wondrous story must be signalized and characterized by the same unwavering, unhesitating boldness with which Jesus here spoke; it is the only way in which the message of salvation will be effective.

It was here that Peter, in his impulsive way, presumed upon a step for which he had absolutely no right. He drew Jesus aside a few steps and began to rebuke Him. The fact that He had just acknowledged Himself to be the Messiah, and that He now spoke of suffering and dying did not seem to Peter to agree. He had an altogether different idea concerning the work of a Messiah. But Jesus could brook no interference where His divine labor of love was concerned. He turned around to all the disciples, in order to draw their attention to His words and acts, since there was a lesson for them all here. He then turned to Peter and reprimanded him most severely: Away, behind Me, Satan! Peter here proved the adversary of Christ; it was Satan himself that was attempting to hinder the work of redemption through Peter. His suggestion and opinion had nothing of God's will in it, but only that of man, weak, sinful man, that cannot understand God's ways and works. All the disciples felt the reproof, though it was directed to Peter only. And the warning stands today for all those that would weaken the fact of Christ's suffering and death in the interest of sinful mankind. In the suffering and death of Christ divine and human ways and methods part company. The cross of Christ is a foolishness and an offense to human ideas, but in reality divine wisdom and divine power.

Concerning true discipleship: V. 34. **And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** V. 35. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it.** V. 36. **For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? V. 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? V. 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.** Jesus had given the disciples a summary of His work in the interest of fallen humanity, the essential and characteristic Messianic ministry. He now

gives a summary of the demands of true discipleship, addressed not only to the twelve apostles, but to a multitude of people whom the Lord expressly calls for that purpose. He does not speak of the manner in which a person becomes a disciple, but the way in which he gives evidence of the faith living in him. There are three points that Christ emphasizes: 1) Denying self; 2) taking up the cross; 3) following Christ. A person who becomes a disciple of Christ really loses his identity, his individuality, so far as spiritual things are concerned. He no longer knows himself or insists upon his opinion and work. He sets aside all his own natural lusts and desires. But he must expect and therefore freely take upon himself the cross and suffering which is sure to strike him on account of his confession of Christ, though it lead into death itself. Thus the entire life of the Christian will finally resolve itself into that one purpose, to follow Christ wherever He may lead, and not doubt for the fraction of a second that His way is always best. The Lord explains this at some length. If anyone wants to save his life, have the full enjoyment of this life and all that it may offer in this world, he will lose the true life in Christ the Savior. But if anyone will regard this life, the world and all it has to offer, as nothing, give it all up for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel, he will find the true life, the true joy and happiness in Him. If we should put the whole world with all its immeasurable riches on the credit side of the ledger and a single man's soul on the debit side, the credit side would be practically effaced. There is nothing in the wide world which can measure up to the value of a single soul, especially not if one considers the fact that the Son of God shed His blood for that soul. Note: This statement will be readily assented to in theory by almost every person in the world, but in practice the great majority discard the idea as foolish; to enjoy this life first, and, if there still be time, to prepare for the next, that is the religion of many, even of those that bear the Christian name.

But there is another distinguishing mark which Jesus emphasizes at the end of His address. The entire world, all men by nature, are an adulterous generation, given to idolatry of some kind, and therefore guilty of all, transgressing all the commandments of God. If therefore, now that the Redeemer has appeared and His message of salvation has gone forth into all the world, anyone hears this Gospel, and yet is ashamed of it and of the Redeemer whose praise it proclaims, then this same Redeemer, but now in the form of the Judge of the living and the dead, will also be ashamed of him and will condemn him on that last great day. For then there will no longer be weakness and lowliness to set Him apart, but He will appear in the glory of His Father, with all the holy angels as His body-guard, Matt. 10, 33; 2 Tim. 2, 12.

Summary. *Jesus feeds four thousand men in the wilderness, is tempted by the Pharisees, warns His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians, reproves their worldly care, heals the blind man of Bethsaida, accepts the confession of His Messidhship, and gives a lesson in true discipleship.*

MARK CHAPTER 9.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Transfiguration of Jesus. Mark 9, 1-13.

A solemn statement: V. 1. **And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.** These words were probably addressed to His disciples only, or at least spoken of them alone, since they presuppose an intimacy with Jesus which most of the people in that country did not possess. Some of those that were standing there in the circle listening to His words would not taste of death, would not be taken away by death, until they would see the kingdom of God coming, or having come, in power. The day upon which the wrath of God was poured out over Jerusalem is, according to Scriptures, the beginning, the dawn of the great day of God on which He will send Christ in glory, to

judge the quick and the dead. The destruction of Jerusalem was not only a type, but actually began the final great judgment of God upon the sinful world that rejected Him and His Son. Several of the disciples of Jesus that heard these words were still alive when the destruction of Jerusalem took place, and thus became witnesses of the way in which the glorified Christ repays, punishes, those that have despised His Word and His grace. So the words of Christ in this instance were both a prediction and a promise.

The miracle of the transfiguration: V. 2. **And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.** V. 3. **And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.** V. 4. **And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.** Six days, or after a six-day interval from the day when Jesus gave His disciples and the people the solemn lesson regarding true discipleship, He added another item of preparation for some of those in His immediate neighborhood. He did not take all of His disciples with Him on this excursion, but only Peter, James, and John; as on other occasions, these three men were His intimates, His most trusted pupils, chapter 5, 37; 14, 33. He took them aside, away from the rest, and led them up into a high mountain where they were all alone, with no one to interfere with their work or any other intention. Whether this mountain or hill was Mount Hermon in the Lebanon Range (9,200 feet high), or Mount Tabor, in the neighborhood of Nazareth, in Galilee (1,000 feet high), cannot be determined definitely from the text. The latter mountain is favored by many commentators because it was mentioned at a very early date. But the claim that the fortress with its soldiers on this mountain would have interfered with the revelation is now generally allowed. But the whole question is not a matter of faith. It is best that people do not know for sure, lest the superstition and idolatry of so-called holy places extend beyond all bounds. Mount Hermon was near Caesarea-Philippi, but Mount Tabor could easily have been reached in a six-day journey.

On this high mountain which Jesus had selected for this demonstration, He was changed, transformed, transfigured before the three disciples; His common, mortal body was changed to a spiritual, immortal body, the spirituality transfused the ordinary body, as one commentator puts it. Not only His body was thus transfigured, but even His garments partook of this peculiar change. They became shining or glittering, charged with light, and so snowy white that no cleaner or dyer on earth would have been able to produce such absolute whiteness. The entire appearance of Christ was one of indescribable splendor, much more so even than that of Moses, after he had spoken with God, 2 Cor. 3, 7; Ex. 34, 29-35. And while the disciples were gazing at their Master in wonder and amazement, there appeared unto them, so that they could see and recognize them, Elijah and Moses, who then had a conversation with Christ concerning His glorification, which was here typified. Moses, the great teacher of the Law and prophet of Jehovah, and Elijah, the prophet that had been so zealous for the honor of Israel's God, were fitting representatives of the Old Covenant. Moreover, Moses had died and been buried by the hand of God, who alone knew where his grave was situated, and Elijah had been taken up into heaven without death by the Lord. They were intimates of God from of old.

The revelation of God: V. 5. **And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elias.** V. 6. **For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.** V. 7. **And there was a cloud that overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son; hear Him.** The effect of this singular experience was such as to put the disciples into a state of ecstasy; they were almost intoxicated with the glory of the singular appearance. They were incidentally in a condition of half-sleep, overcome by the brightness of their transfigured Master. It was while in this state that Peter made the suggestion to Jesus. He was filled with joy as on the great Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel lived in huts made of branches of trees during the eight days of

celebration. If the feeling of elation was to continue as he felt it now, Peter was ready to stay here indefinitely. So he offers to build three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. His idea seems to have been that they might live together in glory, just as Moses did on the mountain of the Lord in the wilderness. Such is the effect which a mere peep, a single glance, into the glory beyond the grave will have on the believers; how much more glorious will the reality be, when Christ Himself will be visible to all believers in eternal transfiguration, and not only Moses and Elijah, but all the thousands of God's elect will be with Him, converse with Him, and praise Him, world without end! Peter evidently thought that Moses and Elijah had come to stay, that was the explanation he made to himself, and that explains his suggestion. His impulsive nature prompted him to say something, and, as in other cases, his first thought, which he voiced almost mechanically, was not the one that fitted the situation, though it is not to his discredit. He knew not what to say in this instance, for they were literally frightened out of their wits. And the end of the miracle was not yet. It happened, Mark writes, in order to direct the attention to the important incidents, first, that a cloud overshadowed them, a bright and shining cloud enfolded them; and secondly, that a voice came out of the cloud, for God the Father was present in the cloud, His great glory was inside; it was the cloud of the New Testament covenant, 2 Pet. 1, 17. The message of admonition which came out of the cloud was: This is My beloved Son; hear Him, render to Him full obedience. That was a sign from heaven such as had never before been witnessed by human eyes. That was such a powerful testimony for the person and work of Christ 'that the disciples were compelled to admit its emphasis and accept its import. Mark: God distinctly calls attention to the Word of Jesus, demanding for it the close and careful attention of all men, and the obedience which is justly accorded to God's Word only. Only he that accepts Jesus as the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, beloved of God even in His state of humiliation, and he that thereupon is obedient to the Word of the Gospel, and puts his full trust in that alone, will be received by God into sonship. But to him the full glory of heaven will be revealed, in a measure even here in the Gospel of salvation, whose content is Jesus, and afterward with the full burst of beauty and radiance, from the throne of the Lamb. "This appearance shows that the present life is nothing in comparison with the future one, which will most surely come upon us that are, in Christ, dead to the world. And we owe it to God that we thank Him with great praise that He has condescended in His great goodness to reveal this to us, and that by this beautiful, open, and powerful revelation He intended to make us sure of the hope of eternal life." 38)

The end of the transfiguration: V. 8. **And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.** V. 9. **And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead.** V. 10. **And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.** Just as quickly as the miraculous appearance had begun, it also ended. The disciples, still half dazed, felt that the pall was lifted, and, looking about them, saw no one but Jesus alone with them. Moses and Elijah had been returned to the place of eternal happiness in the same wonderful manner as they had been brought down to the mountain. Jesus, their Master, now was with them again in His usual form and dress, with no evidence of the glory which had just shone through Him. His reassuring words and touch brought them back fully to their senses. While they were then descending from the mountain together, He gave them the earnest charge to transmit the account of what they had seen to no one until after the resurrection of the Son of Man. The people had an altogether wrong idea as to the work and mission of the Messiah, and the news of this miraculous appearance would only have strengthened this false conception. But at that time, when His death would have removed and disproved all wrong beliefs and hopes in an earthly Messiah, with an earthly kingdom, and especially after He would have risen from the dead, then this revelation should be part of their preaching, they should not hesitate about proclaiming the full truth about the transfiguration. The three disciples accepted this charge in the proper spirit of meekness and obedience; they kept their

secret until the time that Jesus had indicated, even from the other disciples. In the mean time, however, they discussed the question among themselves, how that was to be understood concerning the rising from the dead. Not that they did not know that there would be a resurrection of the dead on the last day. This doctrine was known and believed by all the Jews, the only ones dissenting being the sect of the Sadducees. The difficulty for them lay in this, both when He should arise from the dead, as some manuscripts have it, and how this would be done. Christ's one announcement concerning His Passion, death, and resurrection had not yet entered into their heart and understanding. What express and particular resurrection of the dead the Lord was referring to for Himself was a mystery to them. Thus earnest Christians will find many points in Scriptures and in the sayings of Jesus that are a mystery to them; they do not understand in what sense they are to be understood and applied in individual instances; but careful searching of the Word will open the eyes, under the guidance of the Spirit.

A question of the disciples: **V. 11. And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? V. 12. And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man that He must suffer many things and be set at naught. V. 13. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.** Peter, James, and John were still busy straightening out matters in their own understanding. They had seen Elijah on the mountain, there was no doubt about that. But now the scribes, on the basis of Mal. 4, 5, were teaching that Elijah was to come before the appearance of the Messiah and restore things to the proper state for the coming of the great Lord. They wanted this apparent contradiction explained. Jesus gladly furnishes them the necessary information. Their statement is right: Elijah, coming in advance, was to prepare the way. Their mistake consisted in applying the prophecy to the wrong person. It was not Elijah, the ancient prophet, in his own person, that would reappear on earth, but his antitype. And that antitype, John, had appeared and done his work. But Jesus immediately adds a few words of instruction concerning the question that had bothered them. How is it written about the Son of Man? He asks. They should remember the Scripture-passages which dealt of His person and work, and make the right application. He Himself gives the answer: That He must suffer much and be utterly despised. Those prophecies would be fulfilled in Him. As for those concerning Elijah, they had been fulfilled. John had come, and they, the Jews and especially Herod and Herodias, had worked their spite against him and put him to death. The disciples were familiar with the fate of the precursor, and they could and should expect nothing else for Him, since the Scripture must be fulfilled. It was the obligation which He had taken upon Himself; it was the work which He would carry out to the end for the redemption of the world.

Casting Out a Deaf-and-Dumb Spirit. Mark 9, 14-29.

The return to the plain: **V. 14. And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. V. 15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and, running to Him, saluted Him.** Jesus had been gone over night, leaving His other disciples (except Peter, James, and John) in the plain. It is immaterial, once more, whether they were in Galilee or still in the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi at this time; also, whether the apostles in His absence had preached and performed miracles. But when the Lord returned to His disciples, He saw, even from a distance, that there was some unusual commotion. They were in the midst of an excited crowd, and there were some scribes, probably from the neighboring synagog or even from Jerusalem, disputing with them. Things were apparently not running very smoothly in His absence. Immediately, as soon as the people saw and recognized Jesus, they were amazed with joy. They had not expected to see Him so soon, and matters were approaching a crisis here; so it was with a feeling of relief and joy that they all welcomed Him. Running to Him, they saluted Him most respectfully. "The situation is easily conceivable: The disciples have tried to heal the boy and failed; the scribes, delighted with the failure, taunt them with it, and suggest by way of explanation the waning

power of the Master, whose name they had vainly attempted to conjure with. The baffled nine make the best defense they can, or perhaps listen in silence." 39) For that reason also the people were delighted to see Christ, because they wanted to see fair play and hoped to see a miracle.

The boy with the dumb spirit: V. 16. **And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?** V. 17. **And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;** V. 18. **and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. And I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.** V. 19. **He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me.** V. 20. **And they brought him unto Him; and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.** As soon as Jesus came within speaking distance, He inquired about the cause of the disturbance. He asked not only the scribes, but all of them, What is all this disputing about? The scribes had begun the quarrel, and the people had probably taken sides, some with the scribes, some with the apostles. At the approach of Jesus the excitement subsided, both parties being evidently somewhat abashed by His presence. But one man out of the multitude, whose interest was a very natural and deep one, separated himself from the rest and stood forth, answering. He had brought his son, seeking the Lord in the place where the disciples were; but, Jesus being absent, he had appealed to the disciples to heal the boy, and they had not been able to do so. It was a pitiful tale which the man told. His son was lunatic, Matt. 17, 15, and possessed with a spirit, a demon that prevented his speaking. The boy's organ of speech and all his members were normal, but the spirit held them in bonds. And not only that: the demon at times took hold of him and threw him into paroxysms, or cramps, in which the boy foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth, until his body could no longer stand the strain, when he swooned away in a stupor, much like the withering of a branch under a sudden scorching blast. This recital of troubles and the fruitless effort to become rid of them affected the Lord very deeply and caused Him to voice a bitter complaint. Note: His cry about the unbelief of the generation among which He was laboring, His wish to be freed from their presence, was directed to the whole nation of the Jews. They all, with very few exceptions, had heard the Word of the Gospel with ears that heard not. The number of disciples of Jesus was very small after all His efforts, and the number of believers still smaller. Even the apostles, in spite of their confession concerning Jesus the Christ, were still affected with the unbelief of the great mass of the Jews. Upon Christ's command they now brought the boy to Him. No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God.

The healing: V. 21. **And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.** V. 22. **And oft times it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him. But if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us.** V. 23. **Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth.** V. 24. **And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.** V. 25. **When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.** V. 26. **And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him. And he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead.** V. 27. **But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.** The evangelist purposely records the details of the healing, in order to bring out all the more strongly the healing power of the Lord in contrast with the destructive power of the devil. Jesus made careful inquiries regarding the length of time that the man's son had suffered, and learned that the

demon had taken possession of him in early childhood. He had not prevented his physical growth, but had given every other evidence of his hateful presence by causing him to throw himself into fire, to be burned to death, and into water, to be drowned. We cannot be far wrong in believing that similar symptoms and experiences even today, as convulsions, madness, delirium, lunacy, and others, are due to the hatred of Satan. But it is self-evident that the devil has only so much power over the bodies of men as is permitted him by God. So God had frustrated all attempts of the devil upon the life of that boy. Some one always had been present to save his life. Now the father appeals to Christ: Give us help and have mercy upon us! This was a sincere prayer, but unfortunately he modified it by saying: If Thou art in any way able. Here unbelief was battling with belief; he was not quite certain in his trust in Jesus. He implied some doubt as to His ability to help in this severe case of need. Jesus therefore takes time to correct this feeling, using, in a reproving way, almost the same words that the man had used towards Him: If thou only wert able. Here is the difficulty, the grievous mistake; there is still doubt in your heart. It is a favorite reference of Jesus that He here employs : All things are possible to him that believes. True faith has miraculous, heaven-storming qualities, Matt. 17, 20; Phil. 4, 13. This word had the desired effect with the distraught father. It opened his eyes to his lack of faith. In deep humility he cries out: I believe; come to the assistance of my unbelief. As in the heart of ail Christians, belief and unbelief were battling in his heart. But now faith and trust in the Lord were supreme. He trusts entirely in the help of Christ, also against that evil of unbelief that thrusts its head up now and then in his heart. On the part of God all things are possible, if the believer will but accept by faith what God has long ago prepared for him and enabled him to receive through help from above. Meanwhile the people were coming running from all directions, and Jesus wanted to avoid unwelcome publicity. He therefore earnestly reprimanded the unclean spirit, who here caused deafness and dumbness in the boy, giving him the direct command to go out from him and to stay out. The devil must needs obey, but in doing so, he wreaks his vengeance upon the boy for the last time, throwing him into such terrible convulsions as he went forth from him that the boy fell down as one dead, and many openly declared their belief that he was dead. But when Jesus took him by the hand, he could readily get up and stand. Thus the glory of God, which Jesus, the Man, possessed, was once more made evident in this miracle. The Son of God had again triumphed over the devil. There is lasting comfort in this fact for all believers that put their trust unwaveringly in Christ, the Son of the living God. These the devil, with all his might and cunning, cannot harm. And though he should succeed in killing the body, the soul is safe in the hands of the heavenly Father.

The perplexity of the disciples: V. 28. **And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out?** V. 29. **And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.** The failure of the disciples to effect a cure in this case, when there had been instances of success, chapter 6, 13, perplexed them very much. They had also been deeply humiliated before the people by the sneering remarks of the scribes. When Jesus therefore came into the house where He, and probably His disciples with Him, was staying, they took the opportunity to speak to Him all alone in regard to their failure to expel the devil. Christ's answer was of a nature to cause deep humility in their hearts and to encourage them to strive for a firmer trust in Him. The question of the disciples implied: We surely had faith; we had the definite expectation to effect this cure, but we were sadly disappointed. The answer of Jesus gave them the hint which they needed: This form can be expelled in no way but by prayer and fasting. By serious, believing prayer the devil can always be routed. But prayer implies full reliance upon God and His help. There is where the mistake lay. The disciples, who formerly had driven out devils in the name and in the power of the Lord, here had attempted a cure in their own might. It was presumption, trust in their own ability, that had caused them to stumble and fall. The devil can be conquered only by a prayer rooted in faith and receiving its power from God alone, Matt. 17, 20. 21.

The Last Discourses of Christ in Galilee. Mark 9, 30-50.

A second announcement of His Passion: V. 30. **And they departed thence and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it.** V. 31. **For He taught His disciples and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.** V. 32. **But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.** "Thence," from the country or region where they had been for some time; this points to Gaulanitis. They now made a journey through Galilee, their last trip with the Lord through these familiar scenes. He did no public preaching at this time, He wanted no loud heralding. His purpose was to be alone with His disciples, for their instruction had not yet proceeded to the point it should reach before the time of His great Passion. He got into the habit of referring to His approaching suffering, above all. The entire subject of His teaching touched upon this important Gospel-lesson. The entire Passion was so vivid before His eyes that He speaks of it in the present tense: He is delivered into the hands of men. First Judas would deliver Him into the hands of the Jewish rulers, then these would deliver Him into the hands of the Roman governor. Note the thought included here: The Son of Man, the redeemer in His divine-human nature, having might and authority over all things, delivered into the hands of men, mere men, weak men, that in themselves are powerless before Him. And they kill him. That was their object, and that was, in their opinion, the end of Him and of His aspirations. For Him, however, it is not the end, but only the beginning. After three days He will arise. The remark of the evangelist at this point is almost pitiful. After all the teaching and repeated teaching and referring to the truth of the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had done, the disciples went along the way with Him in ignorance as to the word that He was uttering. And at the same time they were afraid to ask Him. Natural man cannot comprehend the facts of Christ's Passion, and, incidentally, avoids unpleasant subjects. All the solemn, mysterious beauties of the Gospel are hidden from the heart of man until God Himself, through His Holy Ghost, opens heart and mind, and pictures unto it Christ.

The dispute concerning greatness: V. 33. **And He came to Capernaum; and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?** V. 34. **But they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.** V. 35. **And He sat down, and called the Twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.** V. 36. **And He took a child and set him in the midst of them; and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, V. 37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.** After the hurried trip through Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum with His disciples for the last time. Their theological training, however, was by no means at an end, as we see from this incident. The hearts and the heads of the disciples were yet filled with false Messianic hopes; the idea of a temporal kingdom would not down. And this matter they had discussed on the way, among themselves, disputing about rank, quarreling about who should be considered the greatest in their midst. The question may have been broached at this time because Jesus had taken only three of them: along on the mount of transfiguration. Jesus knew of the discussion and, by His omniscience, knew also its topic. Therefore the Lord takes occasion to teach them a badly needed lesson. While He had gone before them, busy with the thoughts pertaining to the way of redemption, they had been engrossed with their vain thoughts, how they might enhance their own glory. They must learn, above all, the lesson of the great paradox in the kingdom of God. To teach them that, He called the Twelve before Him, in a very formal and impressive way. They should, for once, get His full meaning. The general rule in the world is that he is leader and acknowledged as being first that has others working for him, doing work in his service. In the Church of Jesus the reverse is true. There the rank is in proportion to the service offered. The humbler a person is and the more willing he is to serve his fellow-men, the higher he will stand in the economy of God. Instead of urging ambition for high position and power, Christ knows of only one valid reason for fame before Him and His Father, humble, unpretentious service, without a thought of reward. In order to bring home this lesson still

more thoroughly, He took a little child that may have been playing in the neighborhood, placed it in their midst, fondled it in His arms to show His deep regard, His tender love for children, and then told the disciples, that in receiving a child, in rendering to one of these little ones a service, they were rendering one to Him. And a service shown to Him is credited in heaven as though it had been shown to God Himself. This powerful lesson in true humility, in humble service, is needed very urgently in our days, since the false ambition that was found in the midst of the disciples is rampant in the Church and threatens to render much of the preaching of the cross invalid.

An interruption: V. 38. **And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him because he followeth not us.** V. 39. **But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name that can lightly speak evil of Me.** V. 40. **For he that is not against us is on our part.** John, gentle John, whose mildness and uniform charitableness has justly become proverbial, at this time was still a true "son of thunder," as Jesus had called him. His zeal and impetuosity was in danger of doing much more harm than good. He is eager to make a good impression on Jesus at this time, and so he interrupts the Master to tell about an experience which he had had. In their work they had run across a man who was exorcising, casting out demons. Ordinarily, such exorcists conjured with the name of some Old Testament saint or patriarch. But this man used the name of Christ, since he had heard of Him and had probably seen Him expelling demons. This man did not belong to the little band of disciples, he was going over the field on his own responsibility. John's zeal, therefore, had caused him to make an effort at preventing his work (conative imperfect). John's idea was that he had done a good, a commendable thing before the Lord, and eagerly looked forward to the praise which he felt must be forthcoming. But Jesus disappoints him grievously. He censures John for this action on his part. So long as that exorcist was using the name of Jesus reverently, so long as he was employing it for the purpose of performing miracles for the good of people, so long he would not circulate evil reports and blasphemies concerning the Savior. In a case of this kind it is true that everyone not working against Jesus is aiding Him. The same thought is employed by Paul, Phil. 1, 14-19. In false intolerance and legalistic conduct there is often a good deal of presumption and jealousy. We have no right to expect all to serve the Lord in the same way, since gifts and ability are diversified. If others cannot bring the services and sacrifices for Christ which we think proper, we have no right to question the sincerity of their Christianity.

Christ continues His lesson: V. 41. **For whosoever shall give a cup of water to drink in My name because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.** V. 42. **And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.** V. 43. **And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched;** V. 44. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** After the interruption, Christ resumes His discourse. It is not always the big and mighty works in the kingdom of Christ, the miracles, that count and are credited. A small, incidental service, a cup of water offered in His name, to show a service for His sake, is thought of so highly by Him that He promises His definite reward. On the other hand, if anyone scandalizes, offends, causes one of these little ones that believe on Christ, especially also little children, to do wrong or to get an impression which will cause such a person to think less highly of Christ and of the Christian Church, this is an offense which the Lord cannot condemn too strongly. Far better, He says, It would be for such a person to be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck before such an offense is committed. Here a grave responsibility is placed upon all parents, teachers, and all whose duty brings them into contact with children and with such as are small in the kingdom of God, the Christians that are weak in Christian knowledge. To watch over our mouths that they do not speak words, to watch over our members that they do not commit deeds, that will cause harm and offense, that is a solemn obligation, for which account will be demanded on the last day with most severe reckoning. In this respect the

hand is very apt to offend, almost unconsciously it is placed into the service of sin. Constant watchfulness is necessary, lest the sin which it commits, the offense which it gives, become a part of the accumulated guilt which will bring upon such a person the punishment of hell-fire.

The conclusion of Christ's discourse: V. 45. **And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched,** V. 46. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** V. 47. **And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire,** V. 48. **where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** V. 49. **For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.** V. 50. **Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.** Christ here mentions some other members that are very apt to offend, to commit sin, to lead others into sin. The law of sin is always active in our members. Here it is necessary that a person keep these members in subjection. For the Lord speaks figuratively and does not want to be understood, as Luther says, that He here advocates physical mutilation or dismemberment, since that would obviously not take the sin and the desire to sin out of the heart. It is the heart which must be controlled by the spirit of love toward Christ and our neighbor, in order that the hand, the foot, the eye do not perform that which sin desires them to do. Whosoever places his members into the service of sin, of uncleanness, and unrighteousness here in this life, will hereafter pay the penalty for such transgression in all eternity. But whosoever, with the help of the Holy Ghost, brings his members into subjection, trains them, holds his desires in check, does not permit sin to reign in his body, he will retain faith and a good conscience, he will keep body and soul unto life eternal. Note: This passage makes such a deep impression on account of the earnestness of the Savior and because of His solemn reference to the fire of hell, and to the worm that will not die, and to the fire that will not be quenched. The fires of the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where all the refuse of the city was burned, were commonly taken as a type of the fires of hell. As these fires burned without ceasing, day and night, so the fires of hell will offer no respite. And as the worms were continually feeding on the remains of carcasses and refuse that was dumped out into that valley, so some of the torments of hell will be like the ceaseless gnawing of worms. To try to crack jokes at the expense of the doctrine of hell, or to deny this doctrine outright, for the flimsiest reasons, is decidedly blasphemous in view of such passages as the present and Luke 16, 28.

This sacrifice, this continual working and bringing into subjection one's own members for the sake of Christ, is demanded by Christ in the interest of His purpose to make every Christian and the entire Christian Church a salt in this world. As every sacrifice of the Old Testament had to be salted, Lev. 2, 13, so every disciple, every believer, must be salted with fire. Jesus does not refer, in this instance, to the fire of hell, but to the purifying fire of His rule and leading. It is the discipline of the Word and the Spirit of God which gradually cleanses the believers of sin, and kills the works and desires of the flesh, and the fire of tribulation, which renders sin and its results unpleasant, 1 Pet. 1, 4. This fire incidentally performs the work of a salt, it prevents moral rotting and a relapse into the service of sin. And the Christians that have been sanctified by the Word and the Spirit of God and whose sanctification is progressing continually should have this salt with them always, in doctrine and admonition. They shall freely, as occasion offers, rebuke the false works of the world, instead of permitting the world to lead them into sin. But among themselves, one with another, they should maintain peace and not boastingly seek self-glorification. The fact that the Gospel is a salt is brought out strongly by Luther in admonishing the Christians to be a true salt. "Where the salt loses its saltiness, and the Gospel is spoiled with doctrines of men, there the old Adam no longer can be spiced, there the worms will grow. But salt is sharp; therefore it is necessary to have patience and peace in the salt." 40)

Summary. *After the miracle of the transfiguration, Jesus heals a deaf-mute boy, gives His disciples*

information concerning their inability to cast this demon out, announces His Passion for the second time, and gives them a long discourse on service, humility, and on giving offense.

MARK CHAPTER 10.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

A Question concerning Divorce. Mark 10, 1-12.

The journey to Judea: V. 1. **And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan; and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again.** Jesus now, definitely and finally, left Galilee. He went out from Capernaum, after the last discourse to His disciples, journeyed southward along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and then crossed the Jordan into Perea, on the far side of the Jordan, on His way into Judea. But as He went along His way, probably even in Galilee, but especially in Perea, people crowded about Him, His identity being known, and they went with Him, they accompanied Him. With His usual Savior's mercy, He saw these people in their great spiritual need, and therefore He again followed His custom of teaching them the one thing needful.

The Pharisees tempt Christ with a question: V. 2. **And the Pharisees came to Him and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him.** V. 3. **And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?** V. 4. **And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away.** The Pharisees were still dogging Christ's footsteps. As soon as a multitude gathered about Christ, they felt it their duty, in the interest of the Jewish Church, to interfere, and to keep Him from teaching the people. Here they purposely put their question in a broad manner, in order to lead the Lord into a trap, which they thought they had skillfully concealed. If He answered in the negative, they could accuse Him of disagreeing with Moses, and the people would be displeased, since the morals, so far as the Sixth Commandment was concerned, were very loose. If He answered in the positive, they could accuse Him of furthering the prevailing looseness of morals. But Jesus saw through their scheme, and prepared to catch them in their own trap. It was a fine battle of wits. He asked them what Moses had commanded them, with the accent on the verb "command." He wanted them to state what God had said at the institution of marriage concerning the strength of the marriage-tie. They, in turn, hoped to avoid an unpleasant corner in the argument, by referring to Deut. 24, 1, and stating what Moses had permitted. In order to safeguard the position of the wife at least to some extent and to prevent the looseness of the marriage-tie, which was such a scandal in all heathen countries, Moses had, in his legislative enactments, at the instigation of God, enjoined the giving of a writ of divorcement, of a letter properly setting forth the reasons why a man rejected his wife. The object was to prevent divorces for all kinds of trivial reasons.

The answer of Jesus: V. 5. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.** V. 6. **But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.** V. 7. **For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; V. 8. and they twain shall be one flesh; so, then, they are no more twain, but one flesh.** V. 9. **What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.** Jesus was well acquainted with this bit of Mosaic legislation, and He also knew the reasons for the adoption of this precept in the Jewish law. The form of government in the Jewish nation during the first centuries of its national existence was that of a theocracy, of a direct legislating by God. The order to which they referred was given by Moses in his capacity as Jewish lawgiver, in order to prevent worse injury and injustice. The government will sometimes find it a wise policy to leave some wrong go unpunished, lest a great many innocent people suffer with the guilty. But this dispensation of Moses, which was given on account of the hardness of their hearts, did not in any way invalidate the institution of marriage and the holiness of the tie of

wedlock. That institution and the words of institution are part of the Moral Law of the universe; there, in the beginning, God plainly stated His will and intention with regard to the obligations of man and woman in the state of wedlock. He did not create a single sex, but He made two sexes, male and female, Gen. 1, 28. And these two sexes, represented in one man and one woman, were to be united in marriage. Therefore the second passage from Genesis, 2, 14, indicates the normal, the usual state of affairs. A man, having reached marriageable age, and having observed the other preliminary steps enjoined by God, will leave his father and his mother, will sever the relationship of childhood and youth, and will be joined to his wife, will enter into a new relationship which will make him and his wife one flesh. It is, then, no longer a question of their own whim and choice, but of God's ordinance, so that they are no longer two, but only one body and one flesh. It is the most intimate union which is possible in the external, temporal world. This fact should be stated and reiterated in our own midst without ceasing, lest the sanctity of the marriage-bond be disregarded more and more. Young people in many cases do not seek the institution of Christ in the sense in which Christ made the ordinance; they have other motives: the pursuit of voluptuousness and luxury. The inviolability of the marriage contract before God has become a blasphemous jest and mockery. But Christ here says: What God hath joined together, where two people have agreed to become yoke-fellows, to bow their necks under the same yoke, to draw the wagon of life together, to share, under God's rule and blessing, all joys and sorrows alike, there this yoke shall not be broken; no man, not the young people or their parents, not relatives or so-called good friends, no court in the world, shall and can separate them. Even if the courts declare the marriage bond dissolved, it still holds in the sight of God.

An additional explanation to the disciples: **V. 10. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. V. 11. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. V. 12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.** The disciples were still deeply imbued with the teaching of the scribes, of the rabbis, which they had heard from their youth. The statements of Christ differed so plainly from the customs with which they were familiar that they took up the matter with the Master once more in their lodging-place. They wanted to be sure that they had heard aright and that Jesus had nothing to add in further explanation to them alone. But He only summarizes once more what He said on the way: If any man divorce his wife, loose her from the marriage-bond, and marry another, he commits adultery to the prejudice of, against, the first. The loose morals in the intercourse between the sexes may have been the rule among the Jews, and constant association with these abuses may have made the disciples as callous as all the rest. But that does not affect one whit the ordinance of God. The same rule holds true in the case of a woman: If she divorces her husband, looses the marriage-bond that held him to her, as she could do according to Palestinian law in those days, 41) she commits adultery. Cp. Matt, 5, 31.32; 19,3-9.

Jesus Blesses Little Children. Mark 10, 13-16.

V. 13. And they brought young children to Him that He should touch them. And His disciples rebuked those that brought them. V. 14. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. V. 15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. V. 16. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. It was while Jesus was still on His way to Judea, and while He was making the journey by easy stages, that one of the most appealing incidents in His entire ministry occurred. He had probably sat down in some village to rest for a few moments, when a new idea suggested itself to the mothers of the town. They brought little children of all sizes to Him, from infants in arms up, their request to Him being that He merely touch them, that is, put his hands upon them in blessing. There is no indication of a superstitious notion connected with the action. The children

probably all loved the Savior at sight for His gentleness and kindness, and the hearts of the mothers were reached through the children. But here came interference from an unexpected quarter: the disciples harshly rebuked those that were bringing the children. They may have thought that the children were not worth while to bother with, and that the Lord needed the few moments rest and should not be annoyed. No sooner, however, did Jesus notice this peculiar solicitude of the disciples than He, in turn, became much displeased, He was distinctly annoyed and said to them: Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them. He speaks as under the stress of extreme vexation. And He gives the reason for His stern command: The Kingdom belongs to such as these; it is of such as these that the kingdom of God is made up, of children and of such as have childlike, simple faith in Jesus the Savior. It is a powerful declaration concerning the ability of the children to grasp and know the essential truths pertaining to their salvation in a much better and surer way than that usually chosen by the adults. This truth He states also from the other side, confirming His declaration with a solemn oath. If anyone does not accept the kingdom of God, Jesus the Savior, and the faith in Him which the Holy Spirit works in the heart, as a little child, he shall not enter that kingdom. And to emphasize His words still more strongly, the Lord did not hesitate to take the little ones up into His arms and into His bosom, and to bless them with the laying on of hands. "These verses no one will take from us; nor contradict them with valid reasons. For here it says that Christ wants it unforbidden to bring children to Him, yea, He commands them to be brought to Him, and He blesses them and gives them the kingdom of heaven; let us mark that well." 42) It is also worth while, at this point, to note what a Reformed commentator writes: "Though little children, they were capable of receiving Christ's blessings. If Christ embraced them, why should not His Church embrace them? Why not dedicate them to God by Baptism? - whether that be performed by sprinkling, washing, or immersion; for we need not dispute about the mode: on this point let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. I confess it appears to me grossly heathenish and barbarous to see parents who profess to believe in that Christ who loves children, and among them those whose creed does not prevent them from using infant baptism, depriving their children of an ordinance by which no soul can prove that they cannot be profited, and, through an unaccountable bigotry or carelessness, withholding from them the privilege of even a nominal dedication to God; and yet these very persons are ready enough to fly for a minister to baptize their child when they suppose it to be at the point of death!" 43)

The Rich Young Man. Mark 10, 17-31.

The question of obtaining eternal life: V. 17. **And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** V. 18. **And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.** V. 19. **Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.** V. 20. **And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.** After the incident with the young children, Jesus continued His journey, He went out and forward on His way. The inevitableness of the Passion and the end of Christ's life is always indicated in the gospels. Here one, a certain man, according to Luke, 18, 18, a ruler, the chief elder of a synagog in the neighborhood, stopped the Lord. The man came running to Him, He was much disturbed and excited; He threw Himself down upon his knees before Jesus. As an elder of the synagog he was fully acquainted with the laws and traditions of the elders, with all the customary interpretation of the various observances in vogue among the Jews. But he derived no satisfaction from that knowledge, he found no peace for his soul in the round of works prescribed there. The new Teacher would probably be able to help him solve the serious problem which he was battling with, the question of how to obtain the assurance of peace with God. His cry is: Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? It is a cry which thousands of anxious souls that have been taught the way of works and self-righteousness have echoed since, not only among the Jews, but in all church bodies where salvation by man's own deeds is taught,

Acts 16, 30. Note: The man speaks of doing something, of earning, if possible; and he wants to be considered an heir of eternal life, one for whom the glories will be laid up in heaven, in safe-keeping. Jesus does not answer his question directly, but by skilful catechizing tries to lead him to the right understanding of his petition and its fulfillment. Taking up the man's address first, He asks him why he applies the attribute "good" to Him. Far from rejecting the appellation, Jesus accepts it at once, but He wants the young man to understand the full import of the word. In calling Jesus good, he attributed to Him a quality of God Himself, he placed Him on a level with God, all of which is right and good. God is good; Jesus is good : they are on the same level. Now as for his question, Jesus reminds him of the fulfillment of the Law, since the perfect keeping of God's commandments, as the ruler had learned, would give him the assurance of heaven. The Lord mentions a few of the precepts of the Moral Law, those against adultery, against murder, against theft and robbery, against false witness, against fraud, and that demanding obedience to the parents. Note: The sequence of the commandments is immaterial. Jesus mentions only such as pertain to the second table, since these are of such a nature that a person ought to be able to note his transgressions of them very readily. It takes comparatively little spiritual knowledge and understanding to note the faults in thoughts, words, and deeds that are committed against one's neighbor. Jesus had noted at once that this young man was fully satisfied with an external probity before men. People of his stamp must always be referred to the total keeping of the Law of God, when they live so securely in their self-righteousness. If this method works a proper knowledge of sin, then there will also be opportunity for the knowledge of Jesus as the Savior of sinners, and for faith in Him. In this case. the man coolly stated that he had kept all these commandments from his youth. He was still so thoroughly bound in spiritual blindness that he supposed an outward abstaining from the deeds of wickedness and darkness constituted the fulfillment of the Law. Here was true pharisaic conceit. It is the same experience which believers will have in their dealings with the self-righteous hypocrites of this 'World. If they live an outwardly moral life, then they believe they have fulfilled God will, and think they will be acceptable on the last day. And they have never examined their heart to see the mass of filth and transgression to be found there.

The decision: V. 21. **Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.** V. 22. **And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.** In spite of the young man's foolish answer, Jesus looked upon him earnestly, affectionately, He regarded him lovingly. He loved him, not only on account of his youth, his earnestness, and his evident sincerity, but because He wanted, if possible, to save his soul. The man was so utterly unconscious of his spiritual condition that only strong medicine would arouse him to a realization of his needs. He attacked him on his weakest side. Knowing that the man was rich, He told him that he should sell everything he had and give it to the poor. This giving up of the goods most dear to him, upon which he had set his heart, for the sake of the Lord, would assure him a treasure in heaven. And that would also make him a fit disciple of Jesus, one who would be true to his discipleship. This was the Lord's test to convince the man how far he still was from perfection, how badly he was yet lacking in the love toward God and toward his neighbor, how completely his heart was still bound up in his mammon. Perfect keeping of the Law is demanded of the whole world. Loving God above all things includes a full yielding to Him. Should He therefore demand, for the sake of the Kingdom, that we give up all our earthly possessions, yea, life itself, for His sake, and serve our neighbor in humility, there must be no hesitation on our part. This young man was not equal to the test. His face became overcast at the word of Jesus. With a sad face and a heavy heart he walked off. His great riches were his undoing, for upon them he had placed his affection. His amazed confusion at Christ's demand drove him away from the Savior. In a similar way thousands of people that have come into contact with the Gospel and the work of the Church are willing enough to listen, meanwhile priding themselves upon the perfection of their lives. But when a sacrifice is asked for the sake of the

Savior, their zeal cools very rapidly. Then they lose interest in the work of the Church, and turn back to the life that offers them more for the present. But this life is not the end.

The lesson of riches: V. 23. **And Jesus looked round about and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** V. 24. **And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** V. 25. **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** Jesus looked round in the circle of the disciples to see what kind of an impression the incident had made on them. Then He said, very impressively, that those possessing riches would only with difficulty enter into the kingdom of God, come to faith, and finally get to heaven. And as the disciples wondered concerning these words, He repeated the saying, making it a little plainer for their benefit. Trusting in this world's goods makes it impossible for a person to enter into the kingdom of God. For under Him the rule holds good that a person may have this world's goods by God's blessing, for God distributes them as He sees fit. But, incidentally, those, that are rich and are Christians at the same time, hold these goods as though they possessed them not. They consider themselves only the stewards of God, whom God has entrusted with more than others, and therefore will hold themselves responsible in a greater measure. They are therefore not really rich in the sense which the children of this world attach to the term. Jesus brings out the gravity of the situation still more emphatically by stating, in the form of an Oriental proverb, that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. This is in no way an exaggeration, for even as it is possible for anyone to come to faith and remain faithful to the end only by the power of the Holy Ghost, so it is true especially in the case of such as have a special hobby on earth which they love, to which they cling. Such conduct, whether it concerns riches, or goods, or lusts, or wife, or children, hinders the work of the Spirit.

Jesus explains: V. 26. **And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved?** V. 27. **And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.** The disciples, by this time, were almost gasping with perturbation, with very excessive astonishment, saying one to another: Why, who, in that case, can be saved? It was the strongest expression as to man's utter inability to work out his own salvation that they had ever heard. They naturally must draw the conclusion. But Jesus gives them the explanation. Regeneration, conversion, faith is, in every case, a miracle of the grace of God. He is able to do what seems impossible before men. Through His Word He can change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, children of Satan into His own dear children, heirs of damnation into heirs of heaven. Through His power, exerted through His means of grace, He is able also to tear the hearts away from the love of earthly things and let them rest in full satisfaction and complete contentment in their Savior.

The reward of the followers of Christ: V. 28. **Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.** V. 29. **And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake and the Gospel's** V. 30. **but he shall receive an hundredfold, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.** V. 31. **But many that are first shall be last; and the last, first.** The incident they had just witnessed set the disciples to thinking. And Peter, always forward, whose heart had by no means been fully weaned from the things of this world, proposed a question, probably in the name of all the disciples. With meaning emphasis and with a backward look at the rich young man that had proved himself unequal to the test, he reminds Christ of the fact that they have left all they had behind and entered into His discipleship. But with all his self-consciousness, Peter did not quite dare to finish the question. But Jesus knew and understood. It was His mercy that had called Peter and all the disciples, and they were receiving every day of their discipleship under this wonderful Master more

than they had left. But Jesus gave them a further reassurance. If one leaves all that has been dear to him in this world, all his relatives, his house, and all his goods, for the sake of the Redeemer and because of the Gospel, Christ's reward of mercy will be correspondingly great, yea, an hundredfold greater and richer than a person could expect. He that loves Christ and His service more than anything on earth, will receive a compensation far exceeding all that he can understand. Even in this world, in the riches of Christ and the Gospel and the Kingdom of Grace, relationships are established which are far closer and dearer than all blood-relationships of this world. And, in addition, there are richer goods, more wonderful, more lasting possessions that are gained here. They outlast this world. What if they are accompanied by persecutions from the children of this world! They are merely a relish, they merely enhance the value of the spiritual blessings in heavenly gifts which fall to the lot of the believers. And all these gifts merge into the still more wonderful possessions of eternal life, where the fullness of God's riches of mercy will be showered upon those that have remained faithful to the end. This hundredfold compensation, extending into the life beyond, is so certain that its not having been received presupposes the not having forsaken. The depth, fullness, and satisfying beauty of this reward of mercy cannot be adequately described with human language. But Christ adds a word of warning against security. A mere outward membership in the Church, though it may have begun in Baptism, is no guarantee of these blessings of mercy. And even if a person for the sake of the Lord has worked, suffered, sacrificed much, he should beware lest he put his trust in these works, and hope to gain heaven on the strength of his having done more than others. He that wants to earn anything before God with his works, and finally puts his trust in his works, falls from grace and has no place in the kingdom of heaven. But all poor sinners that hope to be saved by faith only will be received by the Friend and Savior of sinners.

Priority in Christ's Kingdom. Mark 10, 32-45.

Third foretelling of the Passion: V. 32. **And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the Twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, V. 33. saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; V. 34. and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again.** The nearer they came to Jerusalem, the more clearly the object of Christ's journey was brought out by His bearing and by His words. They had spent some time in their journey down the valley of the Jordan, and had now crossed the river and were slowly ascending toward the range of hills, on one of which Jerusalem was situated. The bearing of Jesus became stranger as time went by. It was characterized by a resoluteness, by a firmness that troubled and astonished the apostles, and caused all those that followed Him to fear. The strong emotion under which He was laboring, the majesty and heroism which shone forth from His manner, the fact that He preferred to walk alone and ahead of them: all these factors filled all the disciples with fear and with forebodings of an impending calamity. In addition, He took the opportunity of impressing once more on His apostles the fact and the manner of His Passion. He took the Twelve aside, He wanted these, His intimates and His successors in the work of preaching, to realize that they must give up their carnal ideas of an earthly Messianic kingdom. The prophecy which He here spoke is more detailed than the foregoing ones. It specifies that the Jewish authorities would deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles, the Romans; it enumerates the indignities which He would have to endure during His Passion: mocking, spitting, scourging. These facts were vivid, not in His imagination, but in His knowledge. But always, like a shining beacon, came the comforting assurance of the resurrection. By the constant repetition of this fact Jesus hoped to impress the disciples that they would remember it at the critical period.

The request of Zebedee's children: V. 35. **And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.** V. 36. **And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?** V. 37. **They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory.** Jesus had, just before leaving Capernaum, given the apostles a lesson in humility, and tried to impress upon them the chief consideration in the kingdom of God, that of unselfish service. All the more unpleasant, in view of the fact that He was on the way to do the greatest service, to make the greatest sacrifice of all, this incident must have jarred upon Him. For about this time, while they were still in the neighborhood of the Jordan, Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and her two sons, James and John, came to Christ with a request. The mother spoke first, but was seconded by her sons. Jesus, in His kindness, made allowances for their weakness and heard their petition, which was not exactly distinguished by meekness. They asked very urgently that they might be allowed to occupy the places of honor, on the right and on the left hand of Jesus, in the Kingdom of Glory. We here see "that James and John comport themselves evilly beyond measure, since they simply want to force Christ the Lord to make something special of them before the other disciples. There is not only the shameful sin (which is unusually objectionable in the case of preachers), pride and their own honor; for he that regards his own honor, benefit, and the like, and models his preaching accordingly, will not do much good; but such people also have no idea what Christ and His kingdom really stand for. For they suppose that He will begin a worldly kingdom, like other worldly lords. That He wants to forgive sins and give eternal life, and that they are in need of it, of that they do not think, but suppose if they only are great princes and lords, they would have sufficient. And the other ten disciples are not much wiser or more pious. For on account of these things they begin a murmuring, and did not want to give the two brothers an advantage." 44)

Christ's gentle reprimand: V. 38. **But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** V. 39. **And they said unto Him, We can.** **And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized;** V. 40. **but to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.** Jesus here shows a little of the wealth of kind consideration which He is always ready to give to those that sin from weakness. "He deals with them in the most gentle manner, does not give them a harsh word; but instructs them with all kindness that they desist from their request and have other thoughts of His kingdom and their ministry, as a father admonishes his children in all goodness." 45) In order to do this, He asks them whether they think they are able to drain the cup of suffering which would shortly be offered to Him, and be baptized with the baptism of blood which would soon be His lot. They answered in the affirmative, not knowing what they were affirming. "That is Christ the Lord's kingdom, and He Himself, the King in this kingdom, opens the work. He drinks the cup, that is, He suffers, and suffers more and more severely than all His subjects, as we see from His gospel. Such example all those must follow who acknowledge Christ as their Head and Lord, as Paul says to the Romans, 8, 17, that we must become like to the image of the Son of God in suffering, and thereupon in glory." 46) The same cup they would not and could not drink, in spite of their protestations. But they would learn to imitate Him in following the road of suffering and death after Him, and for His sake, for that is the Christian's lot and the Christian's distinction, incidentally also his assurance that God is a loving, kind Father. "For when Christ, our dear Lord, offers us His cup and wants to baptize us with His baptism, that is, when He lays His cross upon us, we are apt to conclude that such cup and baptism is an indication that God is angry with us and does not mean well with us. For thus reason looks upon it: if one is happy and everything goes well, he has a gracious God; but he with whom things do not go well, he has an ungracious God. But here we see that this judgment is wrong. For Christ Himself drinks the cup and permits Himself to be baptized; and yet He is God's dear child, in whom the Father has the

highest and greatest pleasure, and with whom He cannot be angry. Now Christ has only the best and kindest intentions toward His Christians, for otherwise He would not have given Himself into death for them.... Therefore the Christians should have no horror of the cross, but should rather (as it is in truth) accept it as a sure sign that they are God's children and in the kingdom of Christ." 47) At the same time Christ, gently, but firmly, informs them that the fulfillment is a matter of the majestic counsel of God. He has prepared the places of honor and selected those that are to occupy them. As the entire salvation is a matter of God's mercy, so also are the rewards of mercy. They cannot be distributed as earthly monarchs and rulers dispense their bounty, according to the whim of the moment.

Another lesson in humility: V. 41. **And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.** V. 42. **But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.** V. 43. **But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister;** V. 44. **and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.** V. 45. **For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.** The other ten apostles had witnessed the entire incident with jealous apprehension and growing indignation. Not that they did not have the same aspirations, but that others had voiced them first and probably been near accomplishing their design. Jesus believed the time appropriate to repeat the lesson of a short time ago. He called the Twelve to Him, apart from the rest of the disciples that were with them. He then placed a contrast before them. Those who pass for, and are esteemed as, rulers by the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones of the world exercise dominion, use their power as they see fit, chiefly to enlarge their power. That is the case in earthly matters. But within the kingdom of Christ things are, or at least ought to be, far different. There greatness is measured, not by the amount of authority exercised, but by the amount of service rendered. The greater the service that is rendered, in unselfish humility, the higher will be the standing of a person in God's kingdom. The more thorough the self abasement in the interest of one's neighbor and for love of Christ, the greater it will be accounted on God's credit slip. And in this the apostles and all Christians have the most glorious example before their eyes always: He, the great Lord of heaven, who came to earth as the Son of Man, who might have demanded and enforced the service of all creation, did not demand and accept this service, but Himself became the lowest servant of all. That was one object of His coming. And the other is closely connected with this. He freely gave His life as a ransom, as the price of redemption. His life, His blood, was given to pay the guilt of the whole world, and though there is a large number that reject His redemption, there are also, by His grace, many that believe on Him and are saved by such faith. "Mark especially the verse where Christ says: The Son of Man is come to give His life as a ransom for many. For this verse teaches.... of the forgiveness of sins, and how we may obtain it. With our works and merit we are lost; for we owe God such a great sum that it is impossible for us to pay it. How may we then become rid of the guilt? In no other way but that our dear Lord Jesus Christ accepts our guilt and takes our sins from us and lays them on His back and suffers death, which we had earned by our sins, in order that we might be free and liberated from death." 48)

The Healing of Bartimaeus. Mark 10, 46-52.

At Jericho: V. 46. **And they came to Jericho; and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highwyside begging.** V. 47. **And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** V. 48. **And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** Mark here relates the healing of the blind man on the way out of Jericho. Luke tells the healing of one before they entered the city, Luke 18, 35. And Matthew takes both miracles together into one account, Matt. 20, 29. Jesus came

to Jericho and stayed there at least for several hours. His coming and the occurrences during His stay raised quite a stir in the city, and therefore He was accompanied not only by His disciples, but also by a great multitude of people, to whom He spoke words of eternal life as they walked along the way. Near the gate of the city, at a place where all the people passed by, a blind beggar was sitting. Mark notes his name and also explains its meaning for the non-Jewish readers: Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. The noise of the multitude reached him, and he obtained the information that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Of Him and of His many miracles Bartimaeus had heard. He had come to the conclusion that the man who could perform such miracles and preach in such a wonderful, convincing way of the need of repentance and of believing, must be the Son of David, in the special, Messianic sense; the Prophet of Galilee was the promised Messiah, Matt. 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9. Acting upon this certainty, he called out aloud to Him, pleading for mercy and help. And when many people in the crowd, impatient with His whining and crying, bade him hold his peace, he cried all the louder: Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! He would not be denied. Mark well: Jesus undoubtedly knew of the man's presence there, even before he cried the first time, but He permitted him to call once and then again. He wants persistence in prayer, He is delighted with importunity of the right kind. Not to grow weary in pleading with Jesus is the secret of success in obtaining spiritual and also temporal gifts.

The healing: V. 49. **And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.** V. 50. **And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.** V. 51. **And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.** V. 52. **And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.** Jesus was now satisfied as to the man's sincerity and faith. As soon as He expressed the wish to see the blind man, there was a marked change in the attitude of the people. Probably the very ones that were so insistent in bidding the beggar hush now showed him every attention. Undoubtedly the expectation of a miracle also stimulated them to greater activity and kindness. They call to the blind man from all sides: Courage, rise, He calls you! They are now eager with their assistance — absolutely true to life. The effect of all this on the beggar was electrifying: having thrown away his mantle and having jumped to his feet, he came to Jesus, assisted by willing hands. Upon the Lord's question, he has only one plea, uttered now with an air of confident expectation. He was sure that the Son of David could help him, and he did not doubt that the Messiah would help him, if He so wished: Rabbuni, that my eyes might be opened. Jesus knew his faith and treated him accordingly. He dismissed him with the words: Thy faith has saved thee, made thee whole. Because of his faith, the Lord had heard his prayer, for faith is the greatest force in the world. Immediately the miracle was performed, and the former blind man now joined the disciples and followed Jesus as He went on His way toward Jerusalem. This remarkable cure is another proof, not only of the sovereign might, but also of the benevolence of Jesus. His kindness and compassion are His most prominent characteristics in this story, a fact which redounds also to our comfort.

Summary. *Jesus gives a lesson on marriage and divorce, blesses little children that are brought to Him, is interviewed by the rich young man and applies the lesson of the incident, makes another prediction concerning His Passion, gently reprimands the sons of Zebedee and all His apostles for their ambition, and heals blind Bartimaeus.*

MARK CHAPTER 11.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. Mark 11, 1-11.

Preparing for the entry: V. 1. **And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany,**

at the Mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, V. 2. and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. V. 3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. Jesus had probably reached Bethany, on the Jericho road, on Friday evening or Saturday morning. It was a small town located on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and about a mile and a quarter from Jerusalem. Beyond the town, on its east side, the road descends quite abruptly into the Jordan Valley. Next to it, on the road to Jerusalem, was a small hamlet or group of farm-buildings, called Bethphage. Jesus left the home of His friends in Bethany early on Sunday morning. As He reached the outskirts of the town, He called two of His disciples to Him and commissioned them for a peculiar service. They were to go to the hamlet which was just before them, which Christ's entire company was about to enter. Without delay, without trouble or difficulty, they would there find a colt tied in a certain place, upon which no person had ever sat. It was a solemn, important mission, foretold even by the prophets. For sacred purposes only unused animals could be employed, Num. 19, 2; 1 Sam. 6, 7. This colt they should untie from the post and then lead it to Jesus. The directions are very exact and circumstantial, that no mistake is possible. It may, of course, happen that the owner of the animal would object to this proceeding. In that event they were to tell the owner: The Lord has need of him. When He, the great Creator and Master of heaven and earth, is in need of any tiling, it must be forthcoming; any and every creature can be pressed into His service. But, incidentally, the Lord did not abuse His power. He knew that the owner would send the animal, but he also promised, by His messengers, that the foal would be returned without delay, after He had had His use of it. This feature serves to enhance the lowliness of Jesus at His entry: on a borrowed colt, which He has promised to return at once, He rides into the capital city of His nation.

The disciples carry out the order: **V. 4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. V. 5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? V. 6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded; and they let them go. V. 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him.** The disciples carried out Christ's instructions. Coming to the hamlet or group of farm buildings, they followed the road around the farmyard. And there, tied to the door, probably of a stable, or at the door-post of a larger building in the square of the hamlet, they found the colt, which they promptly proceeded to unloose. Some of those that were standing near by, very likely some of the laborers of the place, objected and asked for all explanation. But the disciples used the words which Jesus had taught them. And so the men, having full assurance that the beast would be safely and speedily restored to the owner, gave them leave to lead the colt off. And so they brought the animal to Jesus, throwing their mantles upon him for a saddle, so that Jesus could sit upon the colt.

The reception of Christ: **V. 8. And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. V. 9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. V. 10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! V. 11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the Temple; and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the Twelve.** Meanwhile the news that the Prophet of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth, was coming to the city had spread in Jerusalem. Not only were the pilgrims from Galilee anxious to see Him, but those also from other parts of Palestine where He had been active in His ministry, or where His fame had spread. A peculiar kind of excitement, a form of exultation, took hold of the multitude. In large numbers they flocked forth from the city to meet Him. Those that came early fell in behind Him; those that came later turned around and marched ahead of Him along the road over the brow of the Mount of Olive; Many of

these took their mantles, their holiday dresses, and spread them on the way, as at the reception of a great king. Others took the branches of trees, with the first young leaves, and the palm-branches which they bore in their hands, and strewed them on the way. Still others cut off branches from trees in the fields along the road. And when the excitement reached its height, the people broke forth into snatches of antiphonal singing from the great Hallel, Ps. 117; 118, 25. 26. Many of the customs of one great festival were transferred to the other festivals. Thus here the carrying of the palm-branches and other green foliage, the loud exultation, the public singing of the Hosanna, all were features and customs of the Feast of Tabernacles. The people here confessed Jesus as the Son of David, as the Messiah of Israel, whose kingdom was about to be established. The Spirit of the Lord had here, for a few moments, taken hold of the masses. God wanted to give His Son this open testimony concerning His mission, and incidentally point forward to the day, when all tongues will be obliged to confess that Jesus is the Lord. to the glory of God the Father. The entire incident of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, as it is related in the gospels, is a type of the merciful advent of Jesus into the hearts of His believers, which continues throughout the time of the New Testament. Christ is now exalted at the right hand of God, but He still comes by His Spirit, through His means of grace. He still reigns and lives in His Church and brings to all His subjects mercy, salvation, and peace, all the great benefits which He has earned through His suffering and death.

When Jesus reached Jerusalem, He went up to the Temple. He spent the rest of the afternoon in looking around carefully, with a keenly observant eye. He noted carefully the manner in which the entire worship was done; He marked the traffic which was being carried on in the Court of the Gentiles. But the hour was getting late, and so He went out with the Twelve to Bethany, where He lodged.

The Miracle of the Fig-Tree. Mark 11, 12-26.

The curse upon the tree: V. 12. **And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry; V. 13. and seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. V. 14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And His disciples heard it.** So eager, so concerned, was Jesus about the work of His ministry and about various other matters that had come to His attention that He did not even take time to eat on Monday morning. On their way from Bethany to Jerusalem He felt the pangs of hunger. There was a fig-tree growing by the side of the road, which was in full foliage, though the season was early. But when Jesus went over to it, either to find some of last year's late figs, which sometimes matured in the spring, or to find fruit of the new crop, He was disappointed. All the strength of the tree had gone into foliage; there were no figs. This tree was a type and picture of the Jewish people, and Christ's purpose in performing this peculiar miracle was to bring the attention of His disciples to that fact. The Jews also had the form of godliness, while they denied its power. Three years the Lord had worked in the midst of this nation, in the North and ill the South, but there was little evidence of any Jesuits. The great majority of the people wanted nothing of the Messiah. There was much profession of religion, much boasting of being God's own, peculiar people, but no real, tangible proof of a worship in spirit and ill truth. And so this nation, which God had chosen as His own, would become subject to the curse, just as Jesus here pronounced the curse upon its type, the barren fig-tree. Mark notes that the disciples heard the words of Jesus as He spoke to the tree.

The second cleansing of the Temple: V. 15. **And they come to Jerusalem; and Jesus went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, V. 16. and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple. V. 17. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves. V. 18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might**

destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine. V. 19. **And when even was come, He went out of the city.** As soon as Jesus and His disciples had reached, the city on Monday morning, He went up to the Temple. He lost no time in carrying out a plan which He had formulated over night. Once before He had attempted to impress upon the Temple authorities the need of having some regard to the holiness of God's house, John 2, 13-16. And here He saw the same pollution of the holy places which had so enraged Him before. Again, therefore, in holy wrath, He purged the Temple. The sellers and buyers that were gathered in the Court of the Gentiles He drove away. The tables of the money-changers, of the petty bankers, and the seats of those that sold doves He upset. A vivid picture: The lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep, the fluttering of the released doves and the angry cries of the bankers, all mingling in a commotion of endless confusion as they sought to escape from the wrath of Jesus, Whose majestic figure dominated the scene and forbade any interference. This traffic, which had grown out of a permission to such as could not bring their sacrificial animals great distances, had, like many other permitted customs, become a nuisance of the first rank, threatening the sanctity of the holy place itself. For once, Jesus cleaned out the pollution of those that served their own belly and their money-bags more than the holy name of God. After the Temple-court had once more been purged of the invaders, Jesus would not even allow anyone to carry any instrument or tool through the Temple, using it as a short cut. He felt that the sacredness of the place forbade such a proceeding. He then taught the people, in explanation of His act, by referring to Scriptures, Is. 56, 7; Jer. 7, 11. Should they consider and treat the house that was called after His name like a den of thieves, where trafficking and cheating, and robbing might be carried on unhindered? The real object, the proper use of this house, was that of a house of prayer unto all nations, 1 Kings 8.

This act of Jesus again aroused and embittered the high priests and the scribes. They planned and sought means by which they might put Him out of the way. Their counsels against Him were held with increasing frequency; But they did not dare lay hands upon Him, for the people were simply carried away by admiration of His doctrine, since He taught simply, but effectively, what was written in the Scriptures. But when evening was come, perhaps soon after the time of the evening sacrifice, He again left the city to lodge with friends.

The lesson of the dead tree: V. 20. **And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.** V. 21. **And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away.** V. 22. **And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.** V. 23. **For verily I say unto, you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.** It was on Tuesday morning that Jesus again passed by the fig-tree with His disciples. The curse of Jesus had taken effect; the whole tree, from the roots, was withered and dead. On the evening before things had been in shadow, and therefore the apostles could easily overlook the condition of the tree, especially since their minds were likely occupied with other matters. But in the clear morning light the tree stood out from the rest so prominently that Peter remembered the incident of the day before. In a half-pleased and half-awed manner he called the Lord's attention to the result of His curse. Jesus then proceeds to give the disciples a second lesson from the miracle, one applicable to themselves and to the Christians of all times. He impresses upon them His favorite topic, next to the proclamation of the Gospel. Faith in God, trust towards God, absolute reliance upon Him is required in the kingdom of Christ. Solemnly He declares to them that such a trust has mountain-moving properties, that nothing can withstand it. But the confidence must be absolute, unqualified, not tinged by the slightest doubt. With God's command and promise before us, nothing is impossible. A Christian in most cases does not attain the object that he is striving for because there is some apprehension, some doubt in his heart as to the possibility of carrying out the plan. Such vacillating, uncertain natures defeat the ends of faith. And the tool and weapon of faith, by which it accomplishes its great deeds and wins its victories, as Jesus

impresses upon His disciples, is prayer.

V. 24. **Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.** V. 25. **And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.** V. 26. **But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.** There are two factors which defeat the ends of prayer. The first is the lack of trust in efficacy of prayer. There are things which people need, which they desire, which they bring to God in prayer, and yet they lack assurance, they exhibit hesitation, fear as to the outcome. But Christ here states that every prayer of faith is heard. It may be that the fulfillment of wishes comes in a different form than the believer anticipated, in a manner more conducive to his temporal and eternal welfare, but the fact of God's hearing prayer is unassailable. The second reason why prayers often have no effect is because of the condition of the person's heart that presumes to pray. There cannot be, in the heart of a praying person, enmity, hatred, rancor, ill will, or any other unfriendly feeling which is at variance with the demand of God that a forgiving spirit must dominate our actions. No matter whether Christians have been wronged with or without reason, whether they feel hurt rightfully or wrongfully, their hearts must be filled with forgiveness toward all men. If they refuse to forgive, no matter what the occasion or the provocation, they thereby erect a wall, an impenetrable and insurmountable obstacle between themselves and God. They make God's forgiveness of their own sins impossible, and God will not hear the prayers of such as have no clean record before Him, whose sins are not daily and richly forgiven them through the Gospel. Since they refuse their neighbor forgiveness, they shut themselves out from God's mercy and goodness, and render their prayer of none effect.

The Question concerning Christ's Authority. Mark 11, 27-33.

Christ's authority challenged: V. 27. **And they come again to Jerusalem; and as He was walking in the Temple, there come to Him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders,** V. 28. **and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?** By this time the death of Jesus had been definitely decided upon by the Jewish authorities. Daily they had been having sessions to consider ways and means of carrying out their intention; for it was merely a question of finding a favorable opportunity, since they feared to use power on account of the attitude of the people toward Jesus. The temper of a crowd is always uncertain, and they were awaiting developments with some anxiety. In the mean time they dogged the footsteps of Jesus as He came to the Temple on this Tuesday morning. And they could not refrain from nagging. This method, they felt, would effect at least so much, that He could not be teaching the people. In full force they surround Him, the high priests and the scribes and the elders, probably just as they had come out of the council-chamber. Their aim is to disconcert Him by challenging His right, His authority for yesterday's action. They did not attempt to hide their displeasure over His entire manner of speaking and doing things; they resented the implication that He was the Lord of the Temple.

The effective counter-question of Jesus: V. 29. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.** V. 30. **The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer Me.** V. 31. **And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven, He will say, Why, then, did ye not believe him? V. 32. But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. V. 33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.** Jesus was perfectly willing to give them an account of Himself and of all His actions in the Temple, under one condition. He had one single matter concerning which He desired information from them. If they would answer Him about that, He would be glad to tell them by what authority He was performing His miracles, teaching the people and purging the Temple. The question that Jesus proposed proved a

dilemma to the Jewish chiefs: Whether the work of John the Baptist, specifically his baptizing, was done by orders from heaven, from God, or on his own responsibility. This was a poser for them. For, as they reasoned themselves in their perplexity, if they should say: From heaven, then the obvious retort would be: For what reason, then, did you refuse him belief? On the other hand: But, suppose we say, from men? This they also did not dare to answer, for they were afraid of the multitude, for all of the common people sincerely held that John was a prophet. In either direction there lay trouble for them, and so they preferred not to answer; whereupon Jesus informed them that He also would not answer their challenge. Their conscience told them that, if even the baptism of John was from heaven, then the ministry of Jesus with His wonderful miracles and powerful preaching must surely have authority from God. Thus unbelief is objectionable even from the standpoint of mere moral reasoning. The unbelievers cannot deny the power of the Word, but refuse to bow to the truth of it. And so, when driven to bay, they make use of lies, evasions, and excuses.

Summary. *Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, performs the miracle of the fig-tree, purges the Temple, explains to His disciples the lesson of the dead tree, and answers the challenge of the Jewish authorities concerning His right to do these things.*

MARK CHAPTER 12. [VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Parable of the Vineyard. Mark 12, 1-12.

The vineyard: V. 1. **And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.** For some time now Jesus had not used the parabolic style of teaching, mainly because He had been teaching His disciples alone. But now He began, He resumed this form of presenting the truth which He wanted to impress, principally upon His enemies that had been challenging His authority. Of the parables which Jesus spoke on that Tuesday, Mark relates only one, that one in which the wickedness of the contemplated murder is shown in the proper light. A vineyard a certain man planted. It was a man of wealth, and incidentally a good business man, as the details of the plan show. Having put in his vines, he drew or set a hedge around the plat to keep out the wild animals. He not only built a wine-press for the treading out of the grapes, but he also constructed under it the vat for receiving the juices that flowed from the wine-press. Finally he built a tower, to serve both for storing the fruit and for watching against thieves and birds. Having thus done all that could be expected of an owner, he let it out, he rented it to certain husbandmen, gardeners, and went on a far journey. The parallelism between this story and that of Is.5, 1-7 must have been evident to the scribes at once. This made the effect of the parable all the more damaging.

The wicked husbandmen: V. 2. **And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.** V. 3. **And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.** V. 4. **And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.** V. 5. **And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some.** V. 6. **Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.** V. 7. **But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.** V. 8. **And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.** At the season, at the appointed time, when the first fruits were about to be expected, the owner sent a servant as his representative. The amount agreed upon was to be collected, either in the form of fruit, or of a specified sum of rent money, in accordance with the contract. But instead of living up to their contract, the wicked husbandmen caught hold of the servant, gave him a

thorough beating, and turned him away without a cent. The master was patient. He sent another servant, with the result that they treated the representative with every sign of disrespect and contempt, wounding him about the head and otherwise making short work of him. A third servant was killed outright. And so matters continued for some time, the owner sending servants, and the husbandmen maltreating, beating, or killing them. Note how the evangelist piles up the records against the husbandmen, as he summarizes the parable of Christ. Mark also how the patience of the owner stands out in the account. Now the master had an only son, whom he loved dearly, and who would incidentally be his heir. Him he sent as the last one to these men, with the hope and expectation that they must surely feel a certain amount of reverence for him, since he so obviously represented the master and was entitled to full honor as the future lord of the vineyard. But the wicked husbandmen discussed the matter among themselves; they wanted to get possession of the vineyard, they wanted to rule in it as they pleased, they wanted to enjoy all its produce without interference. So they planned to kill the heir and calmly take possession of the property. This plan they carried out; when the son of the owner came, they admitted him to the vineyard, but then cast him out and killed him, or they cast out his body after having killed him.

This was the gruesome parable that the Lord told the elders, and chief priests, and scribes. Its explanation is evident. The owner of the vineyard is God Himself. The vineyard is His kingdom, which He had planted in Israel. Through the covenant which He had made with this people in the wilderness He had accepted them as His peculiar people. And He had taken the very best care of His nation. He had separated them from the Gentiles, He had given them the strong hedge of His Law, He had set the kingdom and dynasty of David as their strong tower against all enemies, and in the Temple at Jerusalem the rich wine of God's mercy flowed in streams. But history shows how the chosen people of God repaid His mercies, for the husbandmen are the individual members of the Jewish Church, but especially their religious leaders. All of these God admonished and warned, again and again, to bring forth fruit that measured up to the standard of God's mercy. But His prophets were treated with contempt, they were abused, as Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah; they were even put to death, Matt. 23, 35; Heb. 11, 36-38. And still God's patience was riot exhausted. In accordance with His eternal plan of love He sent His own, His only beloved Son, Matt. 3, 17; Mark 9, 7. But Him the leaders of the people were even now planning to kill and would carry out their evil design in only a few days. The result, the final outcome, is even now present with Christ. They were jealous of the authority and power of Jesus, they wanted to have the heritage for themselves to do with it as they pleased.

The application of the parable: V. 9. **What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.** V. 10. **And have ye not read this Scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner;** V. 11. **this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?** V. 12. **And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people; for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them. And they left Him and went their way.** The vivid presentation of Christ in bringing out the cowardliness, greed, and cruelty of the wicked husbandmen must have been most impressive. And so the question which He presented at the climax of the story must have forced the answer in their minds, even if they did not all voice it aloud: He will come and destroy those husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others. The Lord spoke the judgment which His parable forced from the lips of His hearers. Note: The vineyard must not be left desolate after the destruction of the wicked men; it is still capable of producing much fruit if properly cultivated. The evangelists and apostles brought in many a rich result of their labors, even before the destruction of Jerusalem. To bring out the point of His story still more strongly, Jesus refers to a passage of the Psalms, a verse from the great Halley which the Jews sang so proudly at their great festivals, Ps. 118, 22. The stone which the builders rejected, repudiated, thought of no value for their building, for the Church of God, this very one has become the corner-stone, on which the whole building rests, without which it would be insecure and could not stand. This fact is indeed wonderful in

our eyes, just as it is represented by Isaiah, 53, 2. 3. The Jews rejected Christ, the Messiah, they delivered Him into the hands of the heathen to be killed, but Jesus arose from the dead and thus became the foundation and corner-stone of the New Testament Church. In Him, and in Him only, there is salvation. Trust in Him as the Savior of the world is absolutely essential for membership in the body which is named after Him.

The obvious application of the parable and of the Scripture-passage to which Jesus referred angered the Jewish authorities beyond measure. They tried most anxiously to lay hold upon Him, but their fear of the people restrained them, as on the day before, chapter 11, 18. Even this earnest admonition did not have any effect upon their calloused hearts; their hatred of Jesus did not permit any feeling of repentance to arise. They felt the sting of the parable and, being foiled in all their attempts to harm Jesus, they gnashed their teeth in helpless rage and marched off.

Various Questions Proposed to Jesus. Mark 12, 13-34.

The question of tribute: V. 13. **And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words.** V. 14. **And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true and carest for no man; for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? V. 15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny that I may see it.** V. 16. **And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's.** V. 17. **And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.** Having been worsted in the first encounter, the Jewish chiefs lost no time in planning a second attack. They sent to Him, without delay, some keen-minded Pharisees, whose training in sophistical reasoning made them especially valuable at this time, and a few members of the clique of Herodians, whose hopes for the house of Herod made them strong enemies of the Messianic mission of Christ. Cp. Matt. 22, 16. Here ecclesiastical and political ambition was represented, joined in opposition to Christ. They had been instructed and drilled in the part they were to play with great care. With smug hypocrisy and obsequious flattery they come to Jesus. They literally wanted to catch Him with their question, or with His reply. They present their trap with honeyed bait: We know that Thou art truthful, not afraid to say the truth at any time, also that no man's person would deter Thee from saying what Thou believest to be right. But now the wolf shows his fangs: Is it right, is it the lawful thing, should it be done at all times, that census-tribute be paid to the Emperor: or, more urgently: Shall we pay it or not? But their snare was too visible, to the omniscient Christ, above all. They hoped His answer would, in either event, prove His undoing. Should He answer in the negative, the government officials could be informed to that effect; should He answer in the positive, the people, that hated the Roman yoke, could easily be turned against Him. But the Lord read the hypocrisy on their faces, in their words, in their hearts, and told them plainly that He knew their intention. Still He does not deny them an answer. Fetch Me a denarius, He tells them, that I may see. In order to make them feel the disgrace of their action, He acts as though He must make a special study of this grave matter. "The most common Roman silver coin was the denarius, rendered in the Authorized Version 'penny' and in the Revised Version 'shilling.' Its weight varied at different times. In the time of Christ it weighed about 61.3 grains Troy, and was worth 16-2/3 cents of American money.. As the ministry of Christ occurred in the reign of Tiberius, the tribute money shown to Christ was probably a denarius of Tiberius." 49) When they had brought the coin and had given the information that the image and the inscription was that of Caesar, His conclusion and answer were brief : The things of Caesar render to Caesar, and those of God to God. This rule applies at all times and is invaluable in maintaining the proper distinction between Church and State. God's people, the believers of all times, will, above all, give due honor, render due obedience, to God. In things which concern God, the service of God, faith,

and conscience, we are obedient to God alone and permit no man to interfere. But in worldly, civil matters, where money, possessions, body, life are concerned. the Christians will cheerfully obey the government. With these words the Lord has incidentally laid down the distinction which is to be observed between the kingdom of God and the authority of the State, He has here forbidden the State to interfere in Church matters, and the Church to meddle with the business of the government.

The question of the Sadducees: V. 18. **Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, V. 19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. V. 20. Now there were seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. V. 21. And the second took her and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise. V. 22. And the seven had her and left no seed. Last of all the woman died also. V. 23. In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife.** The Herodians and the Pharisees had been obliged to retreat with little glory. Now come the Sadducees, the deniers of the resurrection of the dead. They hope to have much better success. In fact, their confident manner is tinged with facetiousness, as though they were perpetrating a huge joke upon the Galilean Rabbi. They had no idea that the joke would be turned upon them so quickly and easily. They preface their remarks with the announcement that Moses had given them a certain precept. They were referring to the so-called levirate marriage, "the ancient custom of marriage between a man and the widow of his brother, required by the Mosaic law when there was no male issue." Deut. 25, 5-10. Whether their story was taken from facts or fancy is immaterial. They recite it with much circumstantial detail, to make it all the more ridiculous by the long explanation. Seven brothers, one after another, had this woman for their wife. Surely the situation at the time of resurrection, in case all the seven should claim her for wife, would be disagreeable, to say the least. Arguments of this kind are being used by unbelievers even to the present day; their great wisdom will not permit them to believe in such an unreasonable fact as the resurrection of the dead.

The decisive answer of Jesus: V. 24. **And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? V. 25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven. V. 26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? V. 27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.** The question which Jesus uses: Do ye not err on account of this fact?. is stronger than a positive statement as to their wrong belief and argument. He says, in effect: Don't you see how absolutely foolish you are in your belief and in your discussion? The point of your story is based upon a wrong supposition. Two grave facts must be noted against the Sadducees and all that follow them in similar arguments: 1) They do not know the Scriptures; 2) they do not know the power of God. Most of the most rabid and radical enemies of the Bible-truths have never even read the Bible, and yet they presume to judge it in the minutest details. And they have no conception of the great power of God; their finite minds cannot grasp infinity, and yet they make futile attempts to make matters beyond their ken clear to themselves and to others by theories that are subject to change without notice. Marrying and giving in marriage will no longer be practiced in heaven, after the resurrection. All physical needs will then be ended definitely, and all the believers in bliss will be sexless. The terms male and female, husband and wife, will no longer be in use, because there will be no need of them. The loved ones will be in heaven, not in the former relation of blood, but in the closer, happier relation of spirit, in union with Christ the Savior. But Jesus gives the Sadducees a lesson also concerning the resurrection of the dead. Since they rejected all the Old Testament writings but the five books of Moses, He takes His proof from one of these, from Ex. 3, 6. 15. In speaking to Moses at the burning bush, God expressly called Himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. All of these patriarchs, at this

time, had died, and they were presumably dead, so far as men could see and judge. But, Jesus explains to the Sadducees, the fact that God so designates Himself, shows that these men, though dead in body, were yet alive, that their soul, the most essential part of them, was alive. The living God is the God of the living only, His work concerns the living only. This is true of all believers. All, to whom the Lord is God, live unto God, even when they have closed their eyes in temporal death. Death, to them, is only a temporary sleep, in the midst of which God considers them as living. And therefore God will truly awaken all the dead that have fallen asleep in Him to a new and blessed life in all eternity.

The foremost commandment: V. 28. **And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? V. 29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord, our God, is one Lord; V. 30. and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. V. 31. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.** It was not a mere harmless question or request for information which this scribe here uttered. He was rather one of the sharp-witted ones of the Pharisees, whose object was to tempt Christ and lead Him to make a statement which would in some way compromise Him. But it spoke in this man's favor that he realized and was conscious that Jesus answered them well. Approaching, therefore, he put his question as to which was the first of all commandments. If Christ had singled out a separate precept, He might have been charged with unwarranted emphasis upon some individual form to the exclusion of the rest. Thus the Pharisees laid the greatest stress upon the law of circumcision, the keeping of the Sabbath, the proper width of the fringes of the mantles, the correct size of the phylacteries, etc. By giving the summary of the entire Moral Law, in all its various branches, in all its various precepts, Jesus intercepted and warded off any accusation regarding any disregard, on His part, of the sanctity of the Law. He places first of all the *Shema* of the Jews, Deut. 6, 4. The fulfillment of the entire Law flows from love of God, which, in turn, is the fruit, the outgrowth of faith. The one Lord, who has revealed Himself in three persons, is the only Lord in earth and heaven; He requires the whole, undivided service and worship of the man that trusts in Him. With heart, soul, mind, and strength every believer should love Him, that is, to the uttermost degree, with every ounce of everything that is within, throwing all into the scales for the Lord and His service. And to this must be added the second great commandment: Thou shalt love thy neighbors thyself. The love toward one's neighbor flows from the love toward God. He that truly loves God will also love his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the entire Law, and all commandments can be summarized in that one word, love, Rom. 13, 10. Beyond this, higher than this, there is no commandment; this represents the pinnacle of accomplishment in fulfilling the Law.

The Pharisee is convinced: V. 32. **And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God ; and there is none other but He; V. 33. and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. V. 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.** The clear-cut statement from Scriptures which Jesus gave him in answer to his tempting question made a deep impression upon the scribe. There was not a single point which could be gainsaid, there was not a single flaw, on account of which one might start an argument. It was clear, unmistakable Bible-truth. It is always thus where the Word of God is concerned. If the believer is only sure of his Bible-passages, of his proof-texts! They are the eternal truth of the great God, that will stand in spite of all jeering and all arguments to the contrary. The scribe was obliged to assent absolutely: Good, Master, in truth Thou hast said. When the Word of God has spoken, all argumentation must cease. Almost mechanically the scribe repeated the substance of Christ's instruction. But that he was fully convinced, appears from the fact that he varies Christ's

words somewhat and demands love of God also with full understanding. The entire intellect and understanding, the entire ability to reason, is not shut off and put out of commission in a Christian, but rather strengthens his position over against God, since it is taken captive under the obedience of Christ. Every effort of the believing Christian is strained toward that end, of demonstrating his love toward God, of penetrating into the mysteries of God's holy Word by comparing the various sections concerning fundamental doctrines and also by showing the foolishness of the attacks upon the Bible. And if heart, soul, mind, and understanding are thus bound up in the service of God, the entire life of such a Christian will be a continual worshiping, far more valuable in the sight of God than burnt offerings and all offerings; it will be a worshiping in spirit and in truth, John 4, 24. The assent of the scribe pleased Jesus very much, since He saw that he had given the matter careful thought, that he had really understood the distinction which Jesus wished to present, that he grasped the meaning of the Lord. Joyfully He tells him: Not far art thou from the kingdom of God. The answer of the Lord had brought him to his senses. He had gained confidence in the Master of Israel and in His doctrine; he had come to the conclusion that this man must be the Messiah of Israel. The first faint movements of faith had begun in his heart. The divine Word always has the power to convince even the enemies and gainsayers.

David's Son and Lord. Mark 12. 35-40.

V. 35. And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the Temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? V. 36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. V. 37. David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He, then, his Son? And the common people heard Him gladly. All the sects and organizations among the Jews had now had their tilt with the Lord, and in every case His word had prevailed. So thoroughly had He vanquished His enemies that no one dared to ask Him any more questions. But now His turn had come. He had a question to propose which is of prime importance, not only for the Jews, but for every person in the wide World to this day and hour: What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? The answer to this question has become so important that it may well be called the touchstone to determine a man's theology and faith. Jesus asks: How is it that the scribes call Christ the Son of David? With what right do they do that? The appellation "Son of David" for the expected Messiah was so common in that day that the two names were used as synonyms, Matt. 1, 1; 15, 22; 20, 30; 22, 42; 9, 27; 12, 23; 21, 9. And the scribes were right in calling the Messiah thus, for He was a true descendant of David, 2 Sam. 7, 12-16. Incidentally, however, it was also true what David said in Psalm 110, calling the Messiah his Lord. The Lord, the eternal God and Father, had, in that great everlasting to-day, said to David's Lord, to the only-begotten Son of His glory, Sit Thou on My right hand till I put Thine enemies below the footstool of Thy feet, till they are vanquished completely. Evidently the Messiah was here placed on an equality with God the Father. Now the question was how to reconcile the two statements, how to harmonize the apparent contradiction: David's Lord, yet David's Son. Note: Jesus expressly states that it was the Holy Ghost that inspired David to write these words as he did. Every believer has the answer ready and is firmly convinced of the truth of both statements: David's Son, true man, a descendant of David according to the flesh, through His mother Mary possessing the true human nature, is, at the same time, true God, the Lord over all, indued with the power of the deity from eternity, and now sitting at the right hand of the power of God, also according to His human nature. In Him, according to both natures, is our trust; through Him, and through Him alone, we hope to be saved, we have salvation. While therefore the Jewish chiefs, the religious leaders, silently withdrew from the scene, the great multitude, among whom were also many pilgrims, heard Him gladly. And many a soul, weary with the stones of the doctrine of works, may, in these last days, have learned to believe in the Savior.

A last warning of Jesus: V. 38. **And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which**

love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, V. 39. and the chief seats in the synagogs, and the uppermost room at feasts; V. 40. which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. Mark gives only a very short section of the last woe of Jesus upon the scribes and Pharisees, but a passage which exhibits very well the hollowness and the mockery of their hypocrisy. Jesus warns the people against the scribes and their hypocritical ways. They should look, they should watch out for them. And now He characterizes them properly, He shows up their sham and deceit. Their desire, their one supreme wish is to wear garments which called men's attention to them; they take a childish pleasure in bedecking themselves. Long robes they affected, like persons of great distinction, with exceptionally large tassels trailing along the ground. In these they loved to walk about, with no other object than to attract the attention of the multitude. They also loved to be greeted in the market-place; they liked the salutation Master; it gratified their vanity and their self-importance. For the same reason they chose the most prominent seats in the synagogs, those reserved for the elders of the congregation, where they would be sure to be noticed. When they were invited to dinner, they did not wait to be placed by the host, but chose the sofa of the honored guest, often usurping the place of guests more honorable than they. And to this vanity was added selfishness and greed. By promising prayers to widows, and then pompously delivering such intercessions for their welfare, they obtained money. For these prayers, purposely long and pompous, were only a blind to hide their real aim, namely, that of getting money, thus devouring the property, the houses, of the widows. This special form of avarice seems to be rampant in many parts of Christendom to this very hour, for the masses for the dead in the Roman Church certainly come under this heading, and the many prayers in the various cults are not one whit better. Christ's judgment upon them all is short and severe: They will receive the greater damnation. Their hypocrisy is open before the eyes of the Judge and will receive the punishment commensurate with its damnableness.

The Widow's Mite. Mark 12, 41-44. V. 41. **And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. V. 42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. V. 43. And He called unto Him His disciples and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; V. 44. for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living.** The Temple treasuries, thirteen in number according to transmitted accounts, were located in the Court of the Women. Jesus, being weary of His labors of teaching and arguing all day, sat down near these collection boxes, or repositories, the money of each of which was designated for special purposes, and carefully watched the multitude as they cast money into the Temple treasury. The evangelist states that many rich people, perhaps some of the merchants that came to Jerusalem only for the great festivals, threw in much. A few pieces of gold more or less made very little difference to them. It gave them the satisfied feeling of having done their duty when they dropped their superfluous money into the box. But suddenly a woman attracted the interest of the Lord. A poor widow she was, that probably had to support herself as best she could. Two mites she had in her possession, and, though she might have kept at least one of them, she threw them both into the treasury. "Another coin, translated 'mite,' is in Greek *lepton*, 'the small one,' 'Or the 'bit' It was two of these that the widow cast into the treasury, where it is said that two of them equaled a *quadrans*. The 'mite' was, then, of the value of 1/8 of a cent. It was doubtless the smallest coin in circulation, but it has not yet been identified with certainty with any coin that archeology has discovered." 50) There was a lesson for the disciples in this act of the poor widow, and therefore Jesus called them over quickly and pointed out the greatness of the sacrifice. In proportion, she had given more than all the rest that had cast money into the treasury. For, though many of them may have given money equal to thousands of dollars, it was all given from their surplus; these amounts they would never miss; theirs was no sacrifice in any sense. But how different the gift of the widow! She had, out of the depth of her want, in her destitute state, given all that she possessed, her

whole means of living; she had sacrificed the last necessities of life to the Lord, and apparently out of a heart filled with free love for the God of Israel, since Jesus in no way censures her manner of giving. That is, in truth, cheerful giving, and such givers the Lord loveth. A special warning is in place here, since many people try to excuse their infinitesimal gifts for the Lord with a reference to the widow's mite. If cases like hers would actually happen in our days, the treasuries of the Church would be filled to the bursting point, so that the disposal of the money would become a real problem. Let the Christians of the present time learn to be only one tenth as liberal and sacrificing in their gifts to the Lord as this poor widow, and there would never be need of any more cries for help.

Summary. *Christ tells the parable of the wicked husbandmen, is tempted by the Herodians and Pharisees with regard to the tribute to Caesar, answers a question of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, names the foremost commandment of the Law, asks a question concerning David's Son and Lord, warns against the scribes, and praises the poor widow for her gift to the Temple treasury.*

MARK CHAPTER 13.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

Christ Foretells the Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the World. Mark 13, 1-37.

Prophecy concerning the Temple: V. 1. **And as He went out of the Temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!** V. 2. **And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.** The Temple built by Herod to take the place of that erected by the Jews under Zerubbabel and restored and embellished under Judas Maccabaeus, was, so far as outward architectural beauty was concerned, a building, or rather a complex of buildings, of which any nation might have been proud. Beginning in 20-19 B. C., the sanctuary had been wrecked and rebuilt in about eighteen months, but the other halls and chambers of the Temple had been constructed much more slowly. It took forty-six years to finish all the buildings as planned by Herod, John 2, 20, but the last stones of the enclosures with their beautiful sculptured work were not put into place until the year 64 A. D. The disciples thus had good reasons for pointing out to Jesus some of the immense stones, fifty feet long, twenty-four broad, and sixteen in thickness, of which Josephus writes, and they could well admire the immense porticoes, with their slender Corinthian columns and the great central buildings, rising almost 180 feet over the Court of the Gentiles, its marble coping and golden ornaments making it by far the most conspicuous edifice in the entire city. Jesus freely admits that the great size and the magnificence of the Temple are unquestioned, but He also knows, according to His prophetic wisdom, what terrible destruction and devastation would be worked here less than four decades hence, that God's wrath would be poured out upon the city and the Temple in full measure. He knows that the unbelief and the rejection of the Messiah, of His own labor and ministry, would bring upon the Temple such a fate as would vainly seek for a comparison in the history of the world. As for the Temple, not one stone would be left in place upon the other which would not be removed and thoroughly destroyed. This was the beginning of a conversation between Christ and His disciples which was continued on their way over the Mount of Olives, where they stopped for a while, and was probably not ended till they reached Bethany for the night's lodging.

The first signs preceding the end: V. 3. **And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately,** V. 4. **Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?** V. 5. **And Jesus, answering them, began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you;** V. 6. **for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.** V. 7. **And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be; but the end shall not**

be yet. V. 8. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. Mark's description is graphic, vivid: Jesus with His disciples goes over to the mountain and then sits down opposite the Temple, with the great buildings in full view; an impressive setting for an earnest discussion. Throughout the chapter, note: Before the eye of the omniscient Son of God, when He speaks in a prophetic vein, the factor of time does not exist; unless He Himself makes the distinction, all the happenings are in His mind's eye at this instant; He sees them all together, whether they are connected with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem or with the end of the world; then, also, the judgment of God upon Jerusalem was the type and the beginning of the last great judgment. The final destruction of the world steeped in sins was begun in Judea, and its end, with the extension of God's avenging fury over the whole world, may be expected at any moment, we know not when.

The statement of Jesus concerning the absolute destruction of the Temple had made a deep impression upon all disciples. And therefore His three most intimate friends, together with Andrew, the brother of Peter, venture to ask Him about this judgment of God. They combine, in their inquiry, the end of Jerusalem and the Temple and the last day of the world, when all these things will be fully executed. In giving them His answer, Jesus makes no sharp distinction between the two events, but speaks of them in such a way that the signs presaging the one may also be taken as foretelling the other. They should beware of deceivers that would falsely claim Messianic power and authority. As in those days these prophets misled the people, Acts 21, 38; 8, 9, 10, so men and women usurping the Christian name and authority of Christ are appearing in increasing numbers in our days. And they are deceiving many; the Athenians have been surpassed in gullibility and credulousness. As in those days people arose against people and kingdom against kingdom, the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, civil war in Italy, so the wars and rumors of wars of our days have reached a magnitude hitherto unheard of in the history of the world. These things will come; it is inevitable, so long as human nature remains sinful, that they do come; and they come also as a just punishment of God. As in those days there were earthquakes in various places, at Crete, in several cities of Asia Minor, on some of the islands of the Aegean, in Rome and the surrounding country, so the earthquakes of the last two decades, in California, in Alaska, in Java, in Italy, and many other countries and states are preaching a forcible sermon. As there were famines and internal strife in those days, in the days of Claudius Caesar, Acts 21, 28, so at the present time a gigantic famine is threatening a large part of Europe and Asia, hundreds of thousands have perished, and this is but the beginning; and as for seditions, never has social unrest been so apparent throughout the nations as at the present time. The Lord is speaking with a powerful voice, asking the nations to heed His prophecies.

Persecution of the believers: **V. 9. But take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogs ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. V. 10. And the Gospel must first be published among all nations. V. 11. But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.** Incessant watchfulness, untiring vigilance, the Lord enjoins upon His disciples. For the Jews and their leaders would not passively permit the extension of the Christian influence, the spread of the Christian religion. All their various courts would be called upon to hinder the work of the apostles and their assistants. Christ bluntly tells them: You, delivered to the synagogs, shall be maltreated. And for His sake they would have to stand before rulers and kings. All this will be a testimony not to them, but against them. It will be marked down in the judgment-book of God as another item calling down His punishment upon the enemies of His Word. As we read throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and in individual accounts given by St. Paul in his letters, these prophecies were literally fulfilled. And there is little difference between those days and ours, only that at the present time expediency and political measures are urged by the enemies of

the pure Gospel in persecuting the believers throughout the world. But, in the midst of it all, Christ's prophecy shines like a beacon light: And to all nations the Gospel must first be preached. In those days the apostles filled the known world with the glorious news of the salvation gained by Jesus for all men, and in our days there are always some to be found that go out in utter selflessness to bring the news of the reconciliation of God with men through the blood of Christ to every nation. With this promise to guide them, to cheer them, to fill them with new courage every day, the prospect of suffering injustice before the powers that be holds no terror for the believers. Christ tells them not to worry beforehand how they might duly defend themselves against the false accusations. At the critical moment He promises to give them the right words which they may use in defending themselves. The Holy Ghost would directly inspire their utterances, so that their defense would be, in each instance, a powerful vindication of the truth of the Gospel and of the power of God. And the history of the Church since the time of the apostles narrates instances in number which show that God, in times of great crises, awakens men with extraordinary abilities and powers to defend the Scriptures against false accusations and to vindicate Christianity. Though we do not yield to a false enthusiasm in their case, as, for instance, in that of Luther, and are far from claiming direct inspiration for them, yet we know that in their preaching, also in defense of the truth of the eternal Gospel, it was God and His Spirit that was with them.

Dissension within families: V. 12. **Now the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.** V. 13. **And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.** There is no hatred so unrelenting and implacable as that caused by enmity against Christ. It destroys the firmest friendships, it severs the ties of the closest blood-relationship. Brothers, fathers, children will not only stand by unmoved and see their nearest of kin suffer for the sake of their religious, Christian conviction, but they will become inhuman enough to cause these sufferings, to deliver them into the hands of the authorities and cause them to be put to death.

History has scores of examples, from the time of the apostles down through the time of the Inquisition, to the present day. It is an ineradicable characteristic of the world and its children that they hate the truth of the Gospel, even at such times when they speak of toleration and of the value of the Christian spirit for the community. But mark two factors that make such persecutions not only endurable, but under circumstances welcome: They come upon the believers for the sake of the Lord's name, and it is an honor to suffer for Him, on His account; they have a glorious promise: He that endures, patiently suffers, to the end, the same shall be saved. A reward of mercy will come upon him from the boundless treasure of his Lord, salvation will be given him with endless rejoicing in heaven.

The visitation upon the Jews: V. 14. **But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains; V. 15. and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein to take anything out of his house; V. 16. and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.** The Lord here mentions some of the signs that would presage especially the destruction of the Temple and of the city. It makes little difference, so far as the actual point and object of the admonition is concerned, whether we understand by the abomination of desolation the desecration of the Temple by the Emperor Caligula or the armies of the Romans with their ensigns and idols, as they came marching into the country and approached the city of Jerusalem. At any rate, the presence of the armies in the neighborhood of the city, Luke 21, 20, should be considered the final period for remaining in Judea. Jesus warningly interpolates the call: Whoever reads it let him understand! It is important that the disciples heed His warning. All those that were still in the country should then flee, without delay, into the mountains. This the small band of Christians remaining in Jerusalem before the destruction did, finding refuge in the mountain town of

Pella. If one should receive the news of the invasion and its abomination while on the flat roof of his house, he should take no time to enter into the house again, but should flee down the outside steps leading to the open. One at work in the field should not turn back for his mantle. Every minute's delay will increase the danger and the nearness of the calamity.

The horrors of the devastation: V. 17. **But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! V. 18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. V. 19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. V. 20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days.** The prophecy of Christ here becomes so vivid that the apostles had the whole picture before their mind's eye; the precipitate flight, the fear and terror, the greatest hardships falling upon those that are by nature least able to bear them. The condition of those that had but recently become or were about to become mothers would be most pitiful, since they would be severely handicapped for hurried departure. And so far as they all were concerned, they should implore God most earnestly that their flight should not take place in the winter, when the season's unpleasantness would be an added inconvenience. Jesus uses a very strong figure at this point: The days will be tribulation. The people would be so completely submerged and overwhelmed with the horror of it all that they would be able to see nothing but these fears and fightings; there would be such nameless misfortunes and trials that all calamitous experiences of the entire human race would thereby be eclipsed. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem was the bloodiest spectacle which the world has ever seen, and the actual affliction of those days was not been equaled since. If it had not been for the merciful shortening of those days out, of regard for them that were God's own, none would be saved. Note: Both the creation and the work of redemption are here ascribed to God by Jesus; He has created the whole creation, and He loves, and will care for, His believers, He will hear their intercession for others out of loving kindness.

The false Christs: V. 21. **And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, He is there; believe him not; V. 22. for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. V. 23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.** A second warning against the insidiousness and impertinence of the false teachers. They came in those days, in increasing numbers, political Messiahs that promised deliverance from the yoke of the Romans. Their apparent sincerity, the power of their oratory, the mere influence of their personality induced many a person foolishly to cast his lot with them and be carried along with them to his destruction. And they are coming in our days, without the Church and within the Church, political Messiahs, social reformers, millennial dreamers that place the kingdom of Christ here upon earth, that glibly prate of the emancipation of the masses and of a final glorious state where all men will be equal and all men will be happy. They even do signs and wonders, both false and apparently real, by the help of Satan. The object always is to seduce, if possible, the believers, God's own elect. But there will be a deliverance at the last hour. Therefore the believers will, in the mean time, be on their guard. Christ has come, He has left us His infallible Word; we need no further word, or revelation, no key, no new light; all these are signs of the false Christs. The Word is nigh unto us, the Word of the Gospel; that will save our souls, all other words and books of new sects are dangerous, deceiving, destroying. Christ's warning was given in advance on their account.

The coming of Judgment Day: V. 24. **But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, V. 25. and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. V. 26. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. V. 27. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.** The evangelist's account is only a brief summary of the words of the Lord,

but what depth of emotion is in the few words thus recorded! As Jesus looks forward, according to His omniscience, the earlier calamity will merge into the later, the judgment upon Jerusalem is carried out only on a greater scale in the final judgment of the world. There will be no interval of a happy, sinless reign, no millennium. With no respite and without extensive previous warning the Day of the Lord will dawn, it will burst upon the world with great suddenness. Then there will be signs such as are entirely out of the usual course of events in nature; no ordinary eclipses which follow laws and rules framed by God, but a return to chaos. The sun will be darkened; the moon will lose her splendor; the stars will no longer be able to hold the position which was given them by the Creator, but will fall from heaven. There will be a great concussion of the powers of the heavens. The entire universe will go out of joint. The hand of God's providence and government will be withdrawn, and all will be dissolved into its component parts. And then, when the world is falling to pieces and the heavens are being rolled up like a curtain, then they, the people of the earth, will see the Son of Man, the divine-human Savior of mankind, that came into the world for them all, but was received by so few, coming in the clouds. Like a mighty conqueror riding in his chariot of triumph, the former despised Nazarene will appear, with great power and glory. According to His human nature, He has now assumed the full divine glory and majesty, and now returns as the Judge of the living and the dead. In the fullness of this majesty He will command His angels to go forth and to bring together to Him the elect, from the four winds, from every part of the earth, as far as the world extends, wherever human beings have penetrated. Not the slightest shred of the former lowliness and weakness is evident in this glorious picture, it is the great; the almighty Lord of the universe that is here holding the great harvest of the last day.

The parable of the fig-tree: V. 28. **Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near; V. 29. so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. V. 30. Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. V. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away.** In the matter of the proper state of preparedness against the coming of the Lord the fig-tree is used to teach a lesson. When its branch becomes soft and full of sap, and when its leaves come forth, then men have a sure indication that the entire tree has been influenced by the growing warmth; they know that summer-time is near. And the same degree of watching and drawing conclusions is necessary where the disciples of Christ of all times are concerned. The signs, general and special, which the Lord gave the apostles of the near approach of Jerusalem's doom, ought always to be in their memory, and they ought to heed their first warning. Even so the signs, general and particular, that herald the coming of the last day, are clearly given in the Word of God by Christ Himself. There will be no excuse for not knowing about, the coming of the Judgment and preparing for its advent. And the Lord adds another sign: Verily I say to you that this generation will not pass away till all this come to pass. He meant to say, either that some of the people living at the time of this prophecy would be witnesses of the great judgment which would come upon Jerusalem; or, what is more likely, He referred to the race of the Jews. This people, the nation that had rejected Him, should not cease to be a distinct race of people, separate from all the rest, until Christ's coming in glory would take place! They should remain as a standing testimony and proof of the truthfulness of Christ's words. For, as He says with great emphasis, heaven and earth shall pass away, their physical contents and elements will be destroyed in the fire of that last day, but His words shall not pass away. Amidst the ruin of worlds and the destruction of the heavens His eternal Word will stand unchanged as He. Himself, for it belongs to His essence, it is eternal.

The time of the last day: V. 32. **But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. V. 33. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. V. 34. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. V. 35. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh,**

at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, V. 36. lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. V. 37. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. With so much information given them, the disciples might have thought that they ought to know the exact date of Christ's second advent, for that would greatly simplify matters. But Christ rejects the idea before it has been voiced. Of the day when the final judgment will burst upon the world and of the hour of the day when its first indications will come to pass, no person knows; even the angels are ignorant, though they know many of the secrets and mysteries of God. A what is more, the day is not known to Jesus in His state of humiliation. The Son of God, in His capacity as Savior of men and specifically according to His human nature, has renounced His right to this knowledge, chiefly for the sake of men, lest they be tempted to make inquiries and bother Him with importunate pleadings concerning the day and the hour. Here is a secret which is hidden in the omniscience of the Father. But that fact brings out Christ's admonition all the more strongly: Be on the lookout, be vigilant, for the exact time is not known upon earth. All the calculations of the various sects as to the exact date of Christ's coming are utterly unreliable vagaries, and those that follow them are just as foolish. This is brought out in another parable. When the master of a household who has business in a distant part of the country or in a far country is called away he will leave his house in charge of his servants, distributing the work according to the ability of each and giving to everyone some authority and responsibility, each one thus being put on his honor. The porter will be singled out for a special warning, lest he be asleep at his post. Thus Jesus, the Lord of His Church, has given to each one of His believers, His servants, some work to do, some ability, some gifts, with which the individual Christian is to serve Him in His kingdom. The Lord will return some time, soon, almost any minute, and therefore it is necessary for everyone of the servants to be about his business with careful vigilance. The Master may come in any of the four watches of the night, and His coming must find no one sleeping in security. The picture reminds us of the custom of watching in the Temple. This was in the hands of a certain number of priests and Levites, whose business was a sleepless vigilance. At any time during the night, no one knew in which watch, the chief of the Temple-service might make his rounds. And woe to him that was caught asleep at that time! Much more important, however, is the necessity which is laid upon all the disciples of Christ not to become drowsy, listless, and negligent in the Master's work or in constant watching for His coming. Let every Christian write upon the portals of his heart that one word: Watch! It is very true, indeed, that the unbelievers think it a huge joke to ridicule the belief of the Christians about the coming of Judgment Day: Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation, 2 Pet. 3, 3-7. At the same time, however, those very scoffers are the first ones, during a storm or at the time of an earthquake, or in the presence of some other extraordinary manifestation of God in nature, to fall upon their knees and implore God's mercy. It is absolutely safe to stand on God's word and to heed His warning at all times: Watch!

Summary. *Answering several questions of His disciples, Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, predicts the devastation of the Jewish country, mentioning a number of signs that would precede such judgment of God, also prophesies of the end of the world and tells several short parables to impress upon every one the necessity to watch.*

MARK CHAPTER 14.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Anointing of Jesus. Mark 14, 1-9.

The council of the chief priests and scribes: V. 1. **After two days was the Feast of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. V. 2. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the**

people. The Jewish authorities had not given up one bit of their enmity and rage against the Prophet of Galilee. There had been daily sessions in the Hall of Polished Stones and undoubtedly many private consultations of the manner in which the unpleasant interloper might be removed. It was now Wednesday. Mark gives the full name of the festival which was approaching: the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was celebrated on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, the spring month, and it merged into the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two festivals were really celebrated as one, and their names were used promiscuously. The members of the Sanhedrin felt that matters had now reached such a stage that quick action was demanded, John 11, 48. They were anxious to take Him, and yet they felt that it must be done with craft. Die He must, of that they were certain, but wisdom told them not to have the arrest take place on the festival day. Should they attempt that, there was almost sure to be a popular disturbance and demonstration in His favor. That must be avoided at all costs; before or after the festival was the proper time. The poor blind Pharisees did not know that the entire matter was in God's hands, and that the day and the hour of Christ's death had been decided in God's council.

The anointing at Bethany: V. 3. **And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.** V. 4. **And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?** V. 5. **For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.** Mark here inserts a story of the Saturday before, when Jesus first came to Bethany from Jericho, unless we want to assume that two anointings took place. This Simon the leper seems to have been a relative of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. He had been cured of his terrible disease by the Lord and was duly thankful for the gift thus received, in his own way. Jesus had accepted an invitation to dinner with him and was reclining among the guests, when the incidents here narrated took place. A woman came into the room bearing an alabaster vase with genuine and very precious ointment, an Indian perfume made from the stems of a plant growing in the southern Himalayas, known as nard, or spikenard. The woman's actions drew the attention of the entire table company to her. Going over to Jesus, she broke off the narrow neck of the vase, in order that the perfumed ointment might flow out all the more easily and then poured it out upon His head. It was an act of simple, unconscious devotion, of tender love. But it was not viewed with favor by all the table-round. There were certain ones present, and among them not a few of the disciples, with Judas Iscariot leading, that began to feel indignation rising in themselves: Why has this waste of the ointment been made? And not satisfied with mere grumbling, Judas finds the courage to give some reason for his objection: This myrrh might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii (fifty dollars) and the money given to the poor. In this way he snarled directly at the woman, and the others seconded him. It was a passionate outburst altogether out of proportion to the guilt of the woman, even if she had been tactless or extravagant. But the thought of Judas grew out of a heart that had long since ceased to be single in Christ's service. His heart belonged to the devil of avarice; and the poor interested him not at all.

Jesus defends the woman: V. 6. **And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me.** V. 7. **For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good; but Me ye have not always.** V. 8. **She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.** V. 9. **Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.** With all this denunciation being heaped upon her, the woman stood patiently waiting to hear the verdict of Christ. And she was not disappointed in her trust. In a shorter manner than usual, Jesus takes her part and defends her against the senseless attacks of the prosaic disciples and of the greedy Judas: Let her alone; why do you serve her with molestations? Their unwarranted

interference in a matter which, after all, concerned Him and the woman only was extremely distasteful to Him. He wants them to stop nagging her. And not only that: A good work has she performed toward Me. He is pleased with the attention He has received at her hands. Always they had the poor with them, and if they were so anxious to do them good, there would be plenty of opportunities. He does not want to discourage true neighborly love and altruism; He rather implies that the willing-minded will find enough outlet for all benevolent feelings. But in the present instance it was to be remembered that the Lord would not always stay with His disciples and the others in the old familiar, visible intercourse. The woman has thought of that possibility and done what she could to show her devotion while the Savior was yet with them. And, at the same time, she has anticipated the preparations for His burial by pouring this ointment upon His head. His death and burial would take place very soon, and she was not any too soon with her deed of kindness. And Jesus adds a very impressive word, saying that this simple deed would be thought of and spoken of in the entire world, wherever the news of Him, the Gospel, would be proclaimed. Note: Jesus predicts that the Gospel as such, as the news of Him and of His labors for mankind, will be preached, a promise which is extremely comforting to us in the midst of the attacks that are made on the transmitted gospels; and He states that the Gospel will be preached in the whole world, that the glorious news of man's redemption through the blood of the Savior would not be withheld from anyone. This double truth was the best, the most cheering comfort which He could have given the woman.

The Preparation for, and the Celebration of, the Passover. Mark 14, 10-25.

Judas offers to betray Jesus: V. 10. **And Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went unto the chief priests to betray Him unto them.** V. 11. **And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.** The public reprimand which Judas had received in the house of Simon in Bethany, when he voiced his displeasure over the woman's deed of kindness, seems to have been the direct motive for his betrayal. His downward road was similar to that of many that do not cling to the Savior with all simplicity of heart. The fact that he was treasurer of the disciples taught him to crave money and nourished his pride. Soon he loved money, he worshiped gold, he was most anxious to possess all that he could. Ordinary, honest methods of obtaining it did not appeal to him any more, they were too slow; so he became a thief. And now Christ's defense of the woman had roused his anger. One of the Twelve he had been chosen, one of the Twelve he still was, in appearance, but he now went to the chief priests in order to betray his Lord and Master to them. And they? On this matter, where it concerned the murder of an innocent person, they were only too glad to give him audience; they were filled with hellish glee as they contemplated the destruction of the hated Nazarene. They gave him the assurance that they would give him silver, that they would pay him well for his nefarious deed. And Judas, hardened against all the warnings of his conscience, against all appeals of his better nature, from that hour deliberately sought opportunity, how he might betray Jesus at a most convenient time. Judas is a terrible example of the power of Satan over the heart that deliberately leaves and rejects the Lord.

The preparation for the Passover: V. 12. **And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover?** V. 13. **And He sendeth forth two of His disciples and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him.** V. 14. **And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?** V. 15. **And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.** V. 16. **And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them; and they made ready the passover.** It was on the day from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening, the day when the Jews carefully swept out all leaven and leavened bread out of their houses, and which they therefore

reckoned with the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the wider sense, that the disciples of Jesus came to Him with the question whether they would celebrate the festival as usual. Jesus, as a member of the Jewish Church, observed all the outward forms of the Jewish cultus. It was necessary to know this at this time, since on this day the passover lamb was sacrificed at the Temple. So they wanted to know where He would have them go and make everything ready for the eating of the passover lamb. Jesus complied with their request by selecting two of the disciples and giving them very explicit directions. They should go to the city, where they would meet a man carrying a vessel with water. Him they should follow, and at the house where he would enter they should ask the master of the house for the location of the dining-room where Jesus might eat the passover with His disciples. These directions of Jesus the two apostles followed, for they had thereby become His representatives and were acting in the name of the head of the company, which, according to Josephus, numbered between ten and twenty. They went to Jerusalem, purchased a lamb that met the requirements of the law, and took this up to the Temple one hour after the evening sacrifice, when all the priests were busy with the passover sacrifices. One of them killed the lamb himself, its blood being caught by one of the officiating priests to be poured out at the foot of the altar. They then took the lamb to the house which had been designated by Jesus and made arrangements to have it roasted and all the other dishes of the passover meal prepared. The dining-room they found in an upper story of the house, with the necessary sofas all ready. Thus all preparations for the paschal meal were completed. With sunset the Feast of Passover began; it was the 14th of Nisan.

The paschal meal: V. 17. **And in the evening He cometh with the Twelve.** V. 18. **And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me.** V. 19. **And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?** V. 20. **And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the Twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish.** V. 21. **The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born.** In the evening, after the festival had actually begun, after sundown, Jesus came to the city with the remaining apostles, thus making the number of men in His company, Himself not included, twelve. Judas was brazen enough to keep up appearances to the last; he went with the rest as though nothing were wrong. And so the meal was begun and took its usual course. Cp. Matt. 26, 20-26. It was during the feast proper, after the singing of the first part of the Hallel, when they had received the bread and were partaking of the roasted lamb, that the Lord said, with deep emotion: Verily I say unto you that one of you will betray Me, one that is eating with Me; a reference to Ps. 41, 9. This announcement caused the greatest consternation and sorrow in the circle of the disciples. The manner of Christ's announcement had emphasized the gravity of the offense: And so they all, one after the other, put the worried or reproachful question: Surely it cannot be I? Even Judas, the traitor and hypocrite, coolly adds his voice to the general uproar. But Jesus did not give them the satisfaction of hearing the name of the traitor. His loving Shepherd's heart was even then yearning for the poor, blinded sheep that had gone astray. It should not be for want of tender solicitude that Judas continued in his transgression. Christ merely declares that it is one of the Twelve, one of those chosen to be apostles of faith, and more exactly, one of those that dipped his bread into the same dish with Him. It was a dish of gravy-like soup, called *charoseth*, made of raisins, dates, vinegar, and several other ingredients, to which He referred. At just about this time, Jesus, as the head of the little company, dipped a morsel of bread into the dish, and the tremulous hand of Judas was extended, with feigned ease, to receive the sop from Him. But in the excitement, this significant fact was not generally noticed. While Judas reached out his hand, was, in fact, dipping His own hand with that of Jesus into the sauce, Jesus very solemnly declares that the Son of Man, the divine-human Redeemer, would indeed go on with the work, on the path of His Passion, according to Scriptures. But woe to that particular man through whom His betrayal would be brought about; it would have been the best thing for that particular man if he had never been born. To anyone

not thoroughly hardened in sin, these words of Christ must have held a powerful appeal. But Judas did not heed the warning; he acted, or tried to act as though nothing unusual were occurring about him, as though the air were not charged to its utmost capacity with suspended force. His responsibility and guilt at this moment should have been brought home to him with full force; he should have considered the results, the curse of God upon the deliberate transgression, the inevitable punishment, but he saw only the bag of money that was to be his if he was successful in his dastardly undertaking. He was, by his own fault, in the power of Satan.

The institution of the Lord's Supper: V. 22. **And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is My body.** V. 23. **And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank of it.** V. 24. **And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.** V. 25. **Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.** The meal had practically come to a conclusion, with Christ and the disciples still reclining about the table, when the Lord did a remarkable thing. He took bread, either one of the two paschal loaves or a piece that had remained after the meal. Having spoken a blessing over it, He broke it and passed it around to them, probably by going from one to the other, each one receiving a piece. To the several disciples He may have changed the address a trifle, but the substance was always the same: Take and eat; this is My body. This was not a mere symbolical act, for there was not the remotest resemblance between the fragments of bread and the body of a full-grown man. And here it makes no difference whether Jesus spoke Greek or Aramaic on that evening: He stated that the bread which He gave to them is His body. Then He took the cup which they had used during the meal, the third cup being known as the cup of blessing. Having given thanks to God over it, He gave it to them, passing from one to the other. And again He made a very clear statement regarding the contents of that cup: This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. It is the New Testament which was herewith ushered in; the covenant which God makes with the world in and with Christ and His blood and through its shedding has brought salvation to all men, even though only a part of mankind will accept the offering of their redemption through the blood of Jesus. If we believe the words of Christ just as they were here spoken, taking our reason captive under the obedience of Scriptures, we shall always receive the full benefit of this Sacrament. We shall always take from it the assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins. We shall always be strengthened anew in our faith. As the celebration of the first Passover strengthened the Israelites for their long journey through the wilderness, so the Lord's Supper is for the believers of the New Testament food on the way during their earthly pilgrimage. And incidentally, like the paschal meal, it points forward to the end of the journey, to the heavenly banquet, where the Lord will drink with us of the cup of salvation in all eternity. To this the Lord refers when He says that He will henceforth not drink with them of the fruit of the vine. For this expression was the term by which the paschal wine was designated among the Jews, the term which they used in the blessing of, and in the thanksgiving over, the wine. To argue that the Lord had used anything but true, fermented wine in the institution of the Eucharist, is to overthrow all historical and exegetical reasoning. Cp. Matt. 26, 29. The Lord here instituted the second Sacrament of the New Testament. "As in Baptism He loosed from the Old Testament circumcision the sacred washing which accompanied it, and made it the New Testament Sacrament of the covenant entered into, so also now He severed the breaking of the bread and the cup of thanksgiving from the Old Testament Passover, and made it a sacrament of the New Testament redemption." 51)

The Passion in Gethsemane. Mark 14, 26-42.

The walk to Gethsemane: V. 26. **And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.** V. 27. **And Jesus smith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.** V. 28. **But after that I am**

risen, I will go before you into Galilee. V. 29. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. V. 30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice. V. 31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. Jesus had duly finished His last paschal meal; He had incidentally given to His disciples and to all the believers of the New Testament the wonderful blessing of the Eucharist. They now, all together, sang the last part of the Hallel, and then left the upper room and the house of the celebration and slowly wended their way across the Brook Kidron and over to a little garden or orchard on the western slope of Mount Olivet, called Gethsemane, which means "olive-press." It was probably an olive orchard overlooking the valley and the Temple mount. While on their way over there, Jesus suddenly says to His disciples (note the vivid narration of Mark): All of you will stumble, will be offended, this night. "The discipleship was about to experience a moral breakdown." In making this startling announcement, Jesus referred them to a prophecy, Zech. 13, 7. God had foretold that He would afflict, smite the Shepherd, and as a result the sheep would be dispersed, scattered. The suffering of Christ was God's doing, His affliction; it was demanded by His holiness and righteousness: the Substitute of mankind must suffer the stripes for all mankind. At the same time, Jesus adds a cheering prediction. They would not lose their Shepherd, their Master, for all time, since He would rise from the dead and would go before them into Galilee. Note the promise: Their offense would thus not last; His sufferings would terminate in death, but death would not be able to hold Him, He would throw off its fetters and arise from the grave; He would resume the old relation toward them. But Peter, the impetuous and untried, felt his honor assailed in the first announcement of the Lord. Quickly he turns to Jesus with a protest: Even if all should be offended, most certainly not I. Note the presumption: The others may be weak enough, of them perhaps no more can be expected, but it is altogether different, with me. Peter was suffering with too much self-confidence, with too much trust in his own abilities and powers. He should have begged the Lord most humbly to come to his assistance in case the temptation would become too severe for his weakness. Peter's case is that of many Christians whom the Lord has given some special grace, and who then become obsessed with the idea that they really amount to something in the kingdom of God, that without them the Church would suffer a great loss. As a matter of fact, no person is irreplaceable in the work of the kingdom of Christ, and unless every worker makes use of the greatest humility at all times, he may find the experience of Peter repeated in himself, 1 Cor. 10, 12.

Jesus takes the opportunity to give Peter a very emphatic, energetic warning in the form of a prophecy. Solemnly He declares: Verily I say to *thee* that *thou*, with all thy boasting, to-day, in this very night (exact indication of time), before the second cock-crowing (a still more precise fixing of the time), shalt thrice deny Me. Mark gives the most exact account of the denial and all that preceded it, undoubtedly at the instigation of Peter, who always felt the depth of his fall on the night before his Lord's death. Instead of shaking Peter out of his sleepy security, the solemn declaration of Jesus only aroused his zeal the more. He began to say and kept on saying, "abundantly in manner and matter, with vehemence and iteration." He used increasing force in expressing what he thought was the honest conviction of his heart; even if he should have to go into death with the Lord, he would not deny Him. And his self-confident words were echoed in the protestations of the others, who, however, made the assertion only once, and without his fire.

The beginning of the agony: V. 32. **And they came to a place which was called Gethsemane; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray. V. 33. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy; V. 34. and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Tarry ye here and watch.** During the discussion which followed the prediction of Christ they had reached the goal of their journey, Gethsemane. At the entrance Jesus turned to the greater number of the apostles, eight of them, since Judas had left, and bade them sit down while He prayed. As in many other trying situations, He wanted to lay the matter

which was oppressing Him into the hands of His heavenly Father. No matter how great the cross and the affliction, the Christian is always safest if He places it in the hands of God, for then the strength for bearing it will be forthcoming, 1 Cor. 10, 13. Only His three intimate disciples, Peter, James, and John, He took with Him into the garden. And now began the agony of Christ. "Note: He had known during all the years of His ministry what He would have to endure at its end, in the great Passion. He had repeatedly talked to His disciples about it. But now that the hour was upon Him, now that He realized with vivid intensity what it meant to be burdened with the load of the whole world's sin and guilt, it rose before His dazed senses as an appalling revelation. He was amazed, horrified, He was oppressed with a dismal fear. Excessively sorrowful, with a sorrow which no human tongue could express, was His soul, even unto death. The load which had been placed upon Him, the guilt which was searing His soul, threatened Him with death, brought Him face to face with the king of terrors. He, as the greatest of all sinners, felt the curse of death upon the sins He was bearing a million-fold. The anguish caused Him to cling to the three disciples with the pitiful appeal: Remain here and watch! "Such anguish Christ, our dear Lord, wanted to suffer for the honor of His heavenly Father and for the benefit of us men, in order that we might henceforth have a Lord over such anguish, when our face becomes pointed and thin, when our eyes grow dark and sightless, our tongue cannot speak, and our head cannot think: that we then cling to this Man who has conquered this terror and drowned it in Himself. Therefore our anguish also cannot be so great as it was in His heart, for Christ conquered the greatest anguish in His innocent heart, and in His clean, pure blood He has extinguished and overcome the bitter rage and the poisonous, fiery darts of the devil, in order that we might comfort ourselves with His victory. The devil surely shot his fiery darts into Him and pressed them into His heart, saying: Thou art no longer in God's grace, etc. And these darts He has extinguished in His innocent heart, in His delicate body, and in His pure blood, and has let them enter so deeply that they have become dull and no longer have any power over us. This the suffering of other saints cannot accomplish, ... but that of Christ only." 52)

The agony of Christ: V. 35. **And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.** V. 36. **And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.** V. 37. **And He cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Coudest not thou watch one hour?** V. 38. **Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.** V. 39. **And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.** V. 40. **And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him.** V. 41. **And He cometh the third time and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.** V. 42. **Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand.** It was Christ, the man, the human being, that had uttered the pitiful appeal to the three disciples to aid Him at least by watching and praying with Him. And it was His human nature, aided and sustained, indeed, by His divine nature, that here suffered the wrath of the just God. As wave after wave of anguish swept over Him, threatening to engulf and overwhelm Him, the presence of even these devoted disciples became too much for His weakness. He went on from there a little distance, farther into the darkness and loneliness of the garden. Again and again He fell to the ground; it was a long, desperate struggle. And all the while His soul was battling in prayer with God, the sum and substance of His pleading being that the hour, this hour of terrible anguish, of unspeakable torture, might pass by without touching Him. He prays that this be done, if it be possible. He knows that all things are possible to His Father, but He knows also that there can be no contradiction between God's justice and His love. The evangelist records a part of His urgent prayer: My Lord and My Father, all things are possible to Thee; let this cup pass by Me, so it may not touch Me! What deep, incomprehensible humiliation on the part of Christ! And yet, there is not the slightest murmuring or opposing the will of God. The just and stern Judge of the sins of the world is still His dear Father, under whose will He

places His human will without restriction or reservation: But not what I will, but what Thou. The sentence is short, incomplete, as one would speak under the influence of great emotion. He sacrifices His will for the good of the world, for its redemption. After some time, Jesus returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. They had not been equal to the test which He had proposed to them. Sorrow and dread had so weighted down their eyelids that they could not throw off sleep. It was Peter whom the Lord addressed in a reproachful tone: Simon, sleepest thou? Not even one hour couldest thou watch? The name Simon itself is a rebuke, for it was the name he bore before becoming the disciple of Christ. Loudly, emphatically, and repeatedly he had I protested his ability to bear everything with the Lord, even death; and here he was not even able to watch with and for Him for one short hour! Again Jesus admonishes the disciples to watch I and pray, to be wide awake and to use the weapon of prayer. For the spirit, the new man in them, may be ever so willing and ready to work for Christ, yet the flesh, their old weak nature, is weak and stands in need of assistance in spiritual matters all the time. If only all Christians would remember this admonition in all times of spiritual crises, there would be little need of special efforts and unusual sacrifices after the damage has been done. A second and a third time Jesus left the disciples to return to His place of prayer and to wrestle with God in the fierce struggle because of the sins of mankind. When He returned to the disciples the second time, He found them asleep again, in spite of His earnest warning, and their eyes seemed weighted down with sleep; their answer to His call was given in a dazed manner, and they had no excuse to offer; they were helplessly overcome. In the mean time the struggle was continuing in the soul of the Lord, but He was gaining strength toward its close, He was conquering the fear of death, the pains of hell. When He came back to His disciples for the third time, His words sounded almost crisp: Are you still sleeping and resting nicely? It is enough! If not expressed in so many words, the meaning found by some commentators seems to be contained here: The struggle has been brought to an end, the agony has been conquered. Further suffering is before Me; I am about to be delivered into the hands of the heathen, the sinners. But the prospect holds no terrors for Me, though I know that the traitor is even now on his way and at the gates of the garden. Arise; let us go! The Scripture must be fulfilled arid the final conquest made. Christ is ever the Champion of His believers, He goes before them and leads the way; He also battles for them and overcomes the enemies in their stead. But He does not want them to sit idly by and do nothing. They shall follow in His footsteps, go the way that He has gone, and in His power vanquish the enemies.

The Capture of Jesus. Mark 14, 43-52.

The betrayal: V. 43. **And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the Twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.** V. 44. **And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely.** V. 45. **And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him.** Before Jesus had finished His last admonition to His disciples, Judas with his eager band came into the neighborhood, appeared upon the scene. As if to heighten the emphasis upon the heinousness of his transgression, he is called by his full name, Judas Iscariot, the man from Kerioth, one of the Twelve. His treason was all the more dastardly, since he had enjoyed the trust of the Lord and had heard all the confiding talks which the Master had given those of the inner circle. With him came a band (fitting name!) of the servants of the high priests and scribes and elders. As though anticipating resistance on the part of the followers of Christ, there were swords as well as stout cudgels, or clubs, to be used by the members of the party. Perhaps the members of the Sanhedrin hoped to take Christ with all His disciples and thus, at one swoop, to exterminate the hated party. The traitor had used cautious cunning in planning the arrest of Jesus by giving the band a definite sign, previously agreed upon. A kiss, the sign of friendship and love, should be the token to them. That Man they should be sure to take, leading Him away safely, either so that they need fear nothing from Him in the nature of an attempted escape, or that they must be on their guard

and watch the prisoner carefully, lest He walk from their midst, as He had done before, in similar situations. Judas might have saved his breath. The matter was long ago out of his hands and beyond his authority. But Judas lost no time. As quickly as possible he stepped up to Jesus, addressing Him with the reverential term "rabbi" and kissing Him most tenderly, or again and again; disgusting, revolting hypocrisy! With good reason he has been, since that time, an example of warning to the believers of all times. So low may one fall that was once a disciple of Christ, but then has deliberately denied faith and good conscience. History tells of many such Judases that delivered their former fellow-Christians into the hands of their enemies and gave up the most sacred possessions and rights into the hands of the adversaries. There is no meanness so great as that of a former friend.

The capture: V. 46. **And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him.** V. 47. **And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.** V. 48. **And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me?** V. 49. **I was daily with you in the Temple teaching, and ye took Me not; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.** V. 50. **And they all forsook Him and fled.** V. 51. **And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him;** V. 52. **and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.** Not the slightest resistance or show of resistance did Jesus show His captors. They laid their hands on Him and took Him captive, formally arrested Him. But this fact was too much for the fiery Peter, whose name is not mentioned in this account. When the profane hands of the servants touched his Master, his anger overwhelmed him. Misunderstanding a remark of the Lord made earlier in the evening concerning the necessity of being fully prepared, as for warfare, Luke 22, 36-38, Peter had brought a sword, which he now drew. Striking the servant of the high priest, he cut off his right ear. That was carnal, foolish zeal, no matter from what angle it is viewed. Christ's work should not be carried on by means of worldly power and authority. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, so the means He employs for its propagation and defense have nothing in common with the measures advocated by the children of this world and by scatter-brained fanatics. The spiritual sword, the Word of God, is the only weapon of offense and of defense which the Church should wield, but that she should wield skillfully and powerfully, to confound and convince the gainsayers. At the same time, however, Jesus had a very impressive word to say to the members of the capturing party. It was a disgrace for them, it reflected upon them, that they came out with swords and with clubs, as though they were out to arrest a dangerous robber. He reminds them that they might have had opportunity daily to apprehend Him, as He taught in the Temple. This showed very plainly that the present situation was not due to their planning. It would have been an easy matter for Him to obtain His liberty. But the matter of His capture in this way was done in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Unwittingly they were serving to establish the truth of prophecy. Not only the Passion as such, but the individual incidents of Christ's suffering had been foretold, and it was imperative that the Word of God stand true and unassailed, also against the scoffers in our days. This word of Jesus, whereby He yielded to His fate and willingly placed Himself into the hands of the enemies, proved too much for the disciples; it was the rock of offense over which they stumbled. Panic-stricken, they leave their Master and flee with precipitate haste, lest they also be caught by the band and share the Lord's fate. All the proud, self-confident assertions of a few hours before were forgotten. Even so many Christians that were eager with their protestations of loyalty when there was no danger near have left Christ and His Word and Church at the first indication of possible suffering on His account. There is an interesting incident related at this point. It seems that a young man living in one of the houses of the neighborhood had been awakened by the noise of the party, and, hastily throwing a linen cloth about his naked body, went out to see what the trouble was about. Seeing that Christ had been captured, he followed for some distance, either out of curiosity or from apprehension for His safety. But his garment made him all the more conspicuous on the moonlight night, and therefore some members of the party from Jerusalem tried to catch him. But he slipped the

linen cloth from his body, leaving it in their hands, while he escaped from them naked. From the earliest times many commentators have held that this young man was Mark himself, who tells this incident which made such a deep impression upon him on the night of Christ's arrest, and perhaps fully decided him in the Lord's favor.

The Trial before the High Priest. Mark 14, 53-65.

The first part of the trial: V. 53. **And, they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.** V. 54. **And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest; and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.** V. 55. **And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death, and found none.** V. 56. **For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.** V. 57. **And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying,** V. 58. **We heard Him say, I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.** V. 59. **But neither so did their witness agree together.** As soon as: the band of servants, under the leadership of Judas, started out from Jerusalem, the chief priests had undoubtedly sent notice to all the members of the Sanhedrin for an extraordinary session to be held at once in the palace of the high priest of the year. It made no difference, in this case, that they were celebrating a great festival, most of them having hardly finished the paschal meal. Their glee over the probable early realization of their hopes put them in high good humor, in which they could afford to disregard the customs and traditions which they otherwise regarded more important than the works of love themselves. Though it must have been about the hour of midnight, the members of the council responded with great willingness. And so the palace of the high priest Caiaphas was the scene of a most peculiar proceeding, of a court session which is without equal in the history of the world. "This is surely terrible to hear, and yet should be considered with great seriousness that these two orders or estates, the priestly family and the kingly family, are here united against Christ. The fathers and forefathers of the high priests were Moses, Aaron, Levi, and these were the children and descendants of the former. And yet the children of these noted patriarchs have come to that point, that they willfully betray Christ and condemn Him to death. The fathers of the counselors had been Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and these were the children and descendants of the former; and yet such noted people come to that point that they betray and sell their God who was promised to them! It surely would not be surprising if God would be so angry with both forms of government that neither priests nor temporal government would exist; for if these two estates persecute Christ, who then will protect Him on earth?" (53)

Meanwhile curiosity had gotten the better of Peter. He had overcome his fear to that extent that he followed the party and his Master at a safe distance to the palace of the high priest. Having obtained permission, he entered through the arched doorway into the court of the house. The palace probably combined the features of Roman architecture with the style of Judea, being built around a court which was partly or entirely open to the sky. Here the servants had built a fire (whence the name *atrium*, which really means "blackened by smoke," for this part of the house), and were trying to drive away the chill of the spring night. Peter joined them about the fire and warmed himself. It is never a safe and advisable thing for a Christian to seek the company of the enemies of Christ, unless the work of his calling brings him into contact with them, perhaps even places him at the same work-table with them. In such a case great wisdom is required and that prudence which only the Word of God can teach. Here was a case of courting danger without call or reason.

The so-called session of court had begun when Peter came. It was probably only now and then that he could get a glimpse of the assembly hall where the council sat in session. From the beginning the trial was a blasphemous farce. For not only the high priests, but the entire Sanhedrin deliberately set about to find testimony against Christ in order that they might with some show of right condemn Him to die.

But the record of Jesus had been so clean that not the slightest hint of real evidence against Him could be found, John 8, 46. It was an exasperating situation. No matter how many witnesses were announced and even previously instructed, their testimony was not the same, it did not agree. Finally two men were found that garbled the story of John 2, 19-21, declaring that Jesus had referred to the Temple built by Herod, the sanctuary of the Jews. And still their testimony was not the same; they did not agree on points that were essential to make their witness valid. The whole trial seemed doomed to hopeless disintegration.

The sentence of the council: V. 60. **And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?** V. 61. **But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?** V. 62. **And Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven.** V. 63. **Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses?** V. 64. **Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.** V. 65. **And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, to say unto Him, Prophecy; and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.** Caiaphas felt the imperative need of quick action to save the day, for the matter was rapidly coming to a point where the entire council would be obliged to confess its helplessness. Arising therefore from his chairman's seat, he steps forward into the semicircle formed by the chairs of the members. His first thought was that of browbeating Jesus, and thus provoking Him to some statement which could be used against Him: Answerest Thou nothing to these condemnatory charges? But Jesus kept His silence and answered never a word. In many cases, where the enemies of Christ bring accusations against Christ and the Christian Church, that Christianity is a dangerous religion, that it stultifies the intellect, etc., this is nothing but false testimony, which they do not believe themselves, where it would be a waste of breath to argue and to try to convince them of the contrary. The helplessness of the witnesses and of the council, the judges, was in this case so obvious. that any argument on Christ's part would have been useless and would have spoiled the effect. But the high priest feels that he must save the day at all costs. So he finally asks the direct question: Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Here is a specimen of high-priestly religion. For the expression was chosen deliberately, a hypocritical term of reverence in refraining from using the actual name of God. In such matters the high priests could be extremely punctilious. Jesus now determined to end this farce, which must have hurt Him to the depths of His soul. He frankly answers: I am. But He adds that these His false accusers and judges would see Him, the Son of Man, sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven as His throne. When these hypocrites see Him again, it will be in His capacity as the Judge of the world. And how thoroughly will these unjust blasphemers be filled with terror when this same Christ whom they rejected will sit in judgment upon them and require a full account at their hands! But the high priest had gained his object; he thought he had a word now which he could use to establish a case. In order to get the proper dramatic effect, he took hold of his mantle and perhaps both of his tunics, and tore them open, ripped them to pieces at the top. That was a sign of deep grief, of intense suffering. He meant his act to imply that it hurt him more than words could express to hear the prisoner make such a statement. He rejected all further testimony as useless; had they not all heard the blasphemy that this man claimed to be the Son of God? There was but one question to ask yet: What is the fitting penalty, in your opinion, for such a transgression? And with great unanimity the well-instructed hypocrites took their leaders' cue and condemned Christ to be guilty of death. "Therefore Christ is put to death, not in a tumult, nor by rebels, also not by them that did not possess the proper authority, but by those was He killed that had the proper authority. Just as it is done in our days: all the harm that is done to the Christian Church is done by those having the proper authority. Just as we must confess and say of our persecutors that they are princes, bishops, rulers that have power, even from

God, both as concerns worldly dominion and also the power which they might have in the Church by God's Word, if they would only use it correctly. Such as have the full and proper authority are now persecuting the Gospel." 54)

The finding of the court and the sentence based upon it was the signal for a general abandonment of restraint; for with the sentence of death hanging over Him Christ had become an outcast, Lev. 24, 16. The counselors themselves began the cruel mockery, and the servants were only too willing to follow their example. They spat upon Him as an object of utter contempt; they covered a cloth around and over His head and beat Him with their fists, asking meanwhile in a jeering tone that He should prophesy and designate the offenders. And the servants added to the shame of their masters by receiving Him with slaps of the open hand — a cruel and painful torture. "This, then, is the hearing and the accusation which was done in the house of the high priest Caiaphas. And all this is written for our learning that we may know that Christ humbled Himself so deeply for our sake and permitted Himself to be accused, condemned, and killed as the greatest criminal; though He is altogether innocent, so that even His adversaries are obliged to confess secretly, feeling it in their heart that there was no cause of death to be found in Him." 55)

The Denial of Peter. Mark 14, 66-72.

The first denial: V. 66. **And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest.** V. 67. **And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.** V. 68. **But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.** Beneath in the court Peter was; the session of the Sanhedrin was held in an upper room. He was sitting at the fire, where the light from the flames brought out his features very plainly. Now one of the maids of the high priest, the janitress that had admitted Peter into the vestibule, walking past the fire and seeing Peter sitting there and warming himself, had a good chance to observe his features. She promptly pointed him out to the rest of the servants, accusing him of belonging to the party of this Jesus of Nazareth. The matter rather took Peter by surprise; he may have thought himself secure, since he had been admitted to the court. But he thinks himself quick-witted in feigning lack of understanding: I neither know nor understand what thou sayest. It was a lie and a denial of his Lord, as Peter should have felt at once. As a matter of fact, his conscience seems to have been a little uneasy, for he now left his place by the fire and went out into the arched doorway, in the shadow of the portico.

The second and third denials: V. 69. **And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.** V. 70. **And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.** V. 71. **But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak.** V. 72. **And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.** The servants were naturally excited over the trial that was taking place upstairs, and many were the conjectures that were made concerning the Nazarene and His followers. That they were in no gentle mood with respect to the disciples of Jesus may be readily surmised. It was not long, therefore, before a maid, one that had probably heard the first one speak or had now come to take her place, once more pointed out Peter to the others that were near by: This man belongs to the party of the accused. Hardly had the words left her mouth when Peter denied the accusation. But his very eagerness and a certain furtiveness in his behavior now made him a marked man in the court. An hour later, therefore, the attack was renewed. A number of bystanders joined forces in questioning Peter. In addition to other proofs which pointed in his direction, there was the matter of his dialect, which openly proclaimed him a Galilean. The disciples were known to be men of Galilee, and so the inference was plain. Peter was in hot water. He had forgotten his fervent promise to his Master of a few hours ago. His one thought was

to save himself from this predicament and to escape with his life. And so he denies his Lord for the third time. And not satisfied with a mere denial, which seemed too tame under the circumstances, he added cursing and an oath. Thus Peter had renounced his Lord and Master, his Savior, absolutely. He had fallen from grace, he had denied the faith. But the Lord had not forgotten him. The second crowing of the cock reminded Peter of the word of the Lord concerning his threefold denial. And thinking thereon, or, covering his head in bitter shame, he rushed forth into the night and wept bitterly. That was true repentance. Peter knew that he no longer was worthy to be called a disciple of the Lord, but he remembered also that the Lord was long-suffering and merciful and had given him many splendid promises as to his future life. Trusting in the mercy of the Lord he sought and found forgiveness of his sin and again was assured of the love of his Master.

Summary. *Judas makes an offer to betray Jesus after the Lord has been anointed in the house of Simon of Bethany; Christ celebrates the paschal meal with His disciples, institutes the Lord's Supper, warns them against being offended, suffers the agony of Gethsemane, is betrayed and captured, tried by the council of the Jews, condemned to death, and denied by Peter.*

MARK CHAPTER 15.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Trial before Pilate. Mark 15, 1-14.

Jesus delivered to the Gentiles: V. 1. **And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.** The account of the events of that memorable Friday morning, as given by Mark, is very brief, since he omits many incidents that do not bear directly upon the Passion story. His account is characterized by the usual vividness and action. Though it must have been some time after midnight before the members of the Sanhedrin left the house of the high priest, there was little rest for them. For without delay, very early in the morning, as soon as the light of the new morning permitted it, they had another meeting. Some commentators state that it was necessary to have a second meeting to ratify a sentence of death, and that this meeting had to be held in the Hall of Polished Stones in the Temple. The importance of the session is indicated by the fact that not only the various groups of the Sanhedrin are mentioned, the high priests, the elders, the scribes, but that their total number is expressly stated to have comprised the chief council. There certainly was need of their coming together for earnest, anxious consultation; for though they had passed the sentence of death, they no longer had the right to carry this into execution. Only the Roman procurator had the power over life and death, and before him they could not urge the fact that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. That was no political offense, no transgression of the laws of the empire. But they finally agreed upon a course of action, and then, having bound Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, or procurator, who usually came up to the feast to prevent any disturbances that might arise at such a great concourse of people.

The hearing before Pilate: V. 2. **And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He, answering, said unto him, Thou sayest it.** V. 3. **And the chief priests accused Him of many things; but He answered nothing.** V. 4. **And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee.** V. 5. **But Jesus yet answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.** The question of Pilate indicated in what form the accusation of the Jewish authorities against Christ had come before him. Since the enemies had no tangible evidence against the Lord, they construed His confession concerning His Messiahship in such a way as to give it political significance: The Christ, regarding whom every Jew believed that He would establish a temporal kingdom. They insinuated that this Man was a rebel against the Roman government. That was the meaning of Pilate's

question. He may have thought that he here had a case of a periodic Messianic disturbance, although he had the conviction from the start that there was a great deal of jealousy on the part of the Jews involved in the affair. The answer of Jesus to this direct question was just as brief. But the explanation which He afterwards added, as given by John, 18, 36. 37, showed Pilate that the accusation had nothing to do with political affairs and dangers to the government. And the chief priests felt the weakness of their position, since they did not insist upon this one point, but kept bringing other accusations, of a more or less vague character, many of them, their idea being to swamp Pilate with the mass of material and thus to cause his assent to their wishes without making a careful examination of the evidence. Pilate felt the vagueness and uncertainty of the accusers, and in the same strain asked Jesus whether He had no answer to all these charges, since they were made with such vehemence and bitterness. But Jesus observed a majestic silence. Why waste breath when it was perfectly obvious to every sane person that these were nothing but trumped-up charges, without the shadow of a foundation which would stand before any real court of justice in the world. Not so much as a single word did He answer, for He knew also very well that Pilate felt the weakness of the accusers and believed Him to be innocent.

Pilate's attempt to release Jesus: V. 6. **Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.** V. 7. **And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.** V. 8. **And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.** V. 9. **But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?** V. 10. **For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy.** V. 11. **But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.** V. 12. **And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye, then, that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews?** V. 13. **And they cried out again, Crucify Him!** V. 14. **Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him!** What a picture the evangelist paints here! The surging mob before the Praetorium, rabble, for the most part, but reenforced by the friends of the Jewish councilors; the weak, vacillating procurator, helpless before the bloodthirstiness of the multitude, now appearing on the platform before them, then disappearing for a while, racking his brains for some way out of the difficulty; the high priests and the members of the Sanhedrin, circulating around through the mob, holding the excitement at its highest pitch, since their understanding and consequent use of mob psychology enabled them to dominate the situation. Pilate had introduced the custom of giving some prisoner his liberty on this feast, the one whose release the people desired being usually set free. This custom had now practically become an obligation. The people expected this boon at Easter; and both he and they thought of this fact. Pilate believed that he could still save the situation by giving the people the choice between Jesus and Barabbas. For the latter was an exceptionally fierce criminal. As the leader or one of the foremost in a band of rebels, in one of the many insurrections that were troubling the government, he had committed a murder. He had been caught with his accomplices and was now awaiting his punishment, bound in jail. The governor felt that no people could be so depraved as to ask for such an outcast of society. But hardly had he made up his mind just how to manage the affair, when the people, surging forward, began to demand that he do according to custom, that he grant them that which he had always given them. Their request was accompanied by loud bellowing of the rabble, who instinctively felt that they had the situation in their hands. The weak proposal of Pilate confirmed them in their belief: Is it your wish and desire, shall I release to you the King of the Jews? His choice of names for Christ at that moment was probably most unfortunate, for its very use was a challenge and an insult to the members of the Sanhedrin. Ordinarily this scheme of playing off the people with their champion, whom they had hailed with such shouts of joy a few days before, against the priests, whose rule was not always relished by the common members of the Jewish Church, might have been successful. For Pilate rightly surmised, and was being confirmed in his belief with every new move of the accusers, that jealousy, envy, was the real reason

for delivering Jesus to the jurisdiction of his court. But the priests had been too successful in stirring up, in exciting, in instigating the people. There was no longer even the faintest resemblance to an orderly trial with cool and sensible leads on both sides. The people, under the careful prompting of the high priests, were fully convinced in their own minds that they actually, for their own persons, preferred to have Barabbas released to them. Another appeal of Pilate: What, then, is your wish that I should do with Him you call King of the Jews? The repetition of the hated title was again a foolish move on Pilate's part. Lashed to a perfect spasm of fury, the people, led by the high priests, yelled: Crucify Him! Pilate's weak remonstrance as to any guilt on His part was like the chirping of a cricket in the midst of a tornado. For with mounting rage the bellowing cry rolled out through the narrow streets over the city: Crucify Him! The time for reason and sense had gone by. The unleashed rage of the rabble wanted blood, and Pilate, although convinced of Christ's innocence, knew that the situation was beyond him, for this cry that arose from the people, beyond all measure, showed him that it was too late to insist upon justice. Many a so-called man of the world, that thinks he is neutral with regard to Christianity and believes in letting well enough alone, since undoubtedly the Christian Church is doing much for the community, has followed the example of Pilate in a crisis. Feeling that his original conviction was the right, the correct one, he yet, in times of popular agitation and demonstration, has joined the rank of the rabble that cheer to-day and curse to-morrow, that cry "Hosannah" on Sunday and bellow a hoarse "Crucify Him!" on the following Friday.

Condemnation, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus. Mark 15, 15-37.

The sentence and the mockery by the soldiers: V. 15. **And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.** V. 16. **And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.** V. 17. **And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head,** V. 18. **and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews!** V. 19. **And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and, bowing their knees, worshiped Him.** A most significant phrase: Willing, not to do justice, to insist upon the justice for which the Roman courts were known, but: willing to content the people, to give the mob the satisfaction it demanded, to yield to them all that they wanted. It was a sad travesty upon justice, a trial which would have been carried out with greater show of right and fair play in the most ignorant barbarian country. He released to them Barabbas, a fitting sarcasm. One more murderer more or less in a whole nation of murderers would make little difference; let the innocent people be confined in prison and be adjudged guilty of death, while the murderers are not only at large, but in the enjoyment of the highest positions! Jesus, His flagellation, or scourging, having taken place, was officially delivered to be crucified according to the Roman method of dealing with criminals found guilty of death. Note: The scourging, though really pertaining to the acts which Pilate did before the condemnation of Jesus, in order to awaken the pity of the people and thus to gain his object, may also be thought to be, and is here so represented, as the first part of the agony of the crucifixion. It was a fitting introduction to the tortures of the mockery which the cruelty of the soldiers invented and which the anguish of the cross crowned. For it was now the soldier's opportunity; the prisoner was in their hands. They led Him, first of all, into the court of the palace, which served for their barracks and was called Praetorium. Here they called together the entire cohort, or band. Here was a rare chance for sport in which they delighted. In rough playfulness, like children that delight in playing at dressing up, they put a mantle of a purple color upon Him, to represent the kingly garment. A wreath, or crown, of thorns was quickly platted and placed about His head, fittingly to represent the golden circle of the earthly rulers. And then the jeering mockery began, which reflected also upon the Jews. They began to greet, to salute Him, to hail Him as the King of the Jews; for this title they found exceptionally funny: a fitting king for this people that was hated and despised by the Romans. With the reed which they had previously given Him in place of a scepter they now, as the fun began to pall on them, hit Him on the head, to drive the sharp spikes into the tender

flesh of the head, They, spat upon Him as upon a vile and loathsome creature; they fell upon their knees in scoffing worship. Such was the Savior's experience, for His Passion stands out most prominently in the whole account. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He did not hide His face from shame and spitting, Is. 50, 6. It was the mercy and the long-suffering of the Redeemer of the world.

Christ led to His crucifixion: V. 20. **And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.** V. 21. **And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.** V. 22. **And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The Place of a Skull.** V. 23. **And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not.** V. 24. **And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.** V. 25. **And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.** The soldiers soon grew tired of their sport; their victim did not react properly. He bore everything with sublime, majestic fortitude and patience, instead of crying out in pain and anger, as they had anticipated. They therefore took the mantle of mockery off Him and put His own clothes back on Him. The last act of the greatest drama in the world was about to begin; they led Him out from the palace of the governor and the city to crucify Him, to carry out the unjust decree of an unjust judge. Now Jesus had been under terrific physical, mental, and spiritual strain during the last days, and especially during the past twelve hours. The agony of Gethsemane, the capture, the trial in the palace of the high priest with the mockery heaped upon Him, the lack of rest during the night, the bloody scourging which He had just been compelled to endure, all this now combined to sap His strength. And so the soldiers, as the procession had reached the open space before the gates, made use of a right which they possessed, namely, to impress into service any man who happened to meet them. It so chanced that Simon, a Cyrenian, was coming in from the country. He may have been a belated pilgrim, or he may have gone out early on this morning, since the day was in some respects not held quite so strictly as the Sabbath. The evangelist remarks that this Simon was the father of two men that seem to have been well known to his readers, Alexander and Rufus, Rom. 16, 13; Acts 19, 33. So Simon, drafted into service, here had what he probably later considered the great honor of bearing the cross of Jesus for Him: But the physical weakness of Jesus was becoming greater continually. It was now necessary for the soldiers to support Him and probably to carry Him the last part of the way, to the place known as Golgotha, explained by the evangelist as meaning the place of a skull, on account of the peculiar shape of the hill, which resembled the upper part of a human skull. It was the custom to give to the condemned some potion which would tend to deaden the sensibilities, a mixture of wine, or vinegar, with myrrh or gall. But Jesus refused this drink; He wanted to endure His sufferings with full consciousness. And so they fastened him to the cross; they carried out the governor's sentence. The crucified criminal was divested of his clothing, with the probable exception of a loin-cloth, and therefore the soldiers took the garments of Jesus, putting up the various pieces into four heaps or parts, and then gambled for the several heaps, the highest number taking the best clothes. The coat was, according to the account of John 19, 24, made a separate stake, since it could not be divided. Mark notes the hour of the crucifixion, the third hour of the day, nine o'clock in the morning. Thus did the crucifixion of the Lord of heaven and earth take place. The princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2, 8. Christ suffered the punishment of a criminal, 1 Pet. 2, 24. The chastisement of our peace lay upon Him, Is. 53, 5. He endured the shame and disgrace of this form of punishment, Heb. 12, 2. With His free will and consent He was hanged to the tree of cursing, Gal. 3, 13. His entire Passion was for our benefit, for the blessing of the whole world.

The sufferings of the cross: V. 26. **And the superscription of His accusation was written over, The King of the Jews.** V. 27. **And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand and the other on His left.** V. 28. **And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with**

the transgressors. V. 29. And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, V. 30. save Thyself, and come down from the cross! V. 31. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. V. 32. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. In a spirit which savored of vengeful spite, Pilate had prepared a superscription for the cross of Jesus, stating the cause of His punishment, in much the same form as it had been given to Him by the Jewish authorities: The King of the Jews. Neither he nor the Jews themselves knew how true the words were, that this man was indeed, as the Redeemer of the world, the King of all mankind. But they had rejected Him and His message and thereby willfully excluded themselves from the blessings of the Kingdom. The evangelist notes the exactness with which the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled in all the incidents of the Passion, even in those of a secondary nature, by remarking that two robbers, common criminals, were crucified at the same time, one on either side of Jesus, placing Him on an absolute level with the scum of the earth, Is. 53, 12. And now came the procession from Jerusalem, unconsciously, but none the less surely, to fulfill another prophecy which was spoken concerning the suffering of the Savior, Ps. 22, 7-17. First came the common people, with whom the bloodthirstiness had now abated, leaving in its stead the satisfaction of having gained their object and having forced the procurator to do their bidding. They moved their heads from one side to the other, as though questioning the sanity of the Lord in making such statements as they quoted, of His being able to destroy the Temple and to erect it again in three days. Jeeringly they challenge Him to save Himself by stepping down from the cross. Then came the high priests, not minding, for once, the contamination which might result to them from mingling with the common people. They called out to each other and to some of the scribes that also came to enjoy the spectacle in gleeful mockery. They now felt free to admit what they formerly would have denied with the greatest vehemence, the fact that Christ had actually helped others. They are merely surprised and act astonished over the fact that He cannot help Himself. They want a proof of His Messiahship. If He should come down from the cross in plain sight before them, then they would be willing to believe Him. All this was hypocritical mockery. They had rejected Him as the Messiah of Israel, they had hardened their hearts against His message of salvation, they had refused to believe and to draw the correct conclusions in the case of far greater miracles; and they would not have believed Him now. And finally, the robbers that were hanging on either side of the Lord, impelled, perhaps, by the excruciating agony of the crucifixion, began to vituperate Him, to heap blasphemous epithets upon Him. It was a veritable orgy of blasphemy of every kind that was held there under the cross. And all the time the Lord was hanging there, meekly, patiently suffering and dying for them, for the very men that were casting the most insulting epithets into His face. That is one of the most inexplicable marvels of history.

The last hours and the death of Jesus: V. 33. **And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. V. 34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? V. 35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias. V. 36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down. V. 37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.** Meanwhile it had become high noon. Suddenly, without warning, darkness came upon the whole earth, not the darkness of a solar eclipse, for it was now the time of the full moon, nor of dense clouds, nor of a desert wind-storm. The sun was blotted out, it lost its light; it was a miracle of God. The entire universe was suffering with the Son of God; the sun was hiding his face in shame, on account of the spectacle of men murdering their Creator. The significance of these three hours, during which the face of the Savior was mercifully hidden from the curious gaze of a blasphemous multitude, is shown in the Savior's cry at the end of these three

terrible hours. Out of a heart breaking with grief and shame over the fathomless abyss of sin the cry of anguish is wrung forth: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This depth of humiliation on the part of the Redeemer is beyond human comprehension. Those three hours of darkness cover the mystery of unfathomable depravity on the part of the entire human race, and of inexpressible love on the part of the Savior. He had been forsaken by God; He had been given into the power of death and hell. God had withdrawn from Him the mercy of His presence; He had suffered the pain of being condemned to all eternity for the sin of the world. Jesus here felt the full force, the full terror of the divine wrath which has been kindled on account of the million-fold trespasses of mankind. He drained the cup of the curse of God to the last dregs; He had suffered the eternal damnation of hell. The eternal Son of God in the eternal depths of hell! But all this was done for our salvation. The punishment of hell lay upon Him, in order that we might go free. For note that He clung to His Lord, His heavenly Father, in the midst of all this terror. He was still His God, His highest good, to whom He offered full obedience and thus conquered' wrath, hell, and damnation.

Jesus had called out the last words in the Aramaic tongue, just as the evangelist has recorded the words. Some of those that were standing near by, whether of the soldiers or of the Jews, deliberately misunderstood His words and gleefully explained them to the rest as though the Lord had called upon the Prophet Elijah to help Him in this last extremity. And when Jesus thereupon cried out in His thirst and one of the bystanders, more soft-hearted than the rest, hurried over with a sponge-full of vinegar on a reed to give Him some alleviation of His burning suffering, he could not refrain from joining in the jeering, whether Elijah would come and help Him down from the cross. But now the end was at hand. Jesus gave a loud cry, a shout of triumph and joy, in which He also commended His soul into the keeping of His Father, and then He quietly breathed forth His spirit, He gave up His soul, His life. It was a true death; it was a complete severance of soul and body. But He was not overcome by His sufferings, He did not die of exhaustion. His dying was an act of His own free will. Voluntarily, in His own power, He placed His soul into the hands of His Father. He had power to lay it down, John 10, 18. And, as the Stronger One, in dying, He conquered death. He gave Himself for us as a sacrifice, He accomplished a perfect reconciliation for the sins of all people. Through death He destroyed the devil that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb.2, 14. 15.

The Burial of Jesus. Mark 15, 38-47.

Immediate effects of Christ's death: V. 38. **And the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.** V. 39. **And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly, this Man was the Son of God.** V. 40. **There were also women looking on afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome; V. 41. (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.** As a great sign had accompanied Christ's deepest suffering, so nature now signified its horror, at God's command, over the blasphemous deed which had been done on Calvary. While the earth was rocking in quivering terror over the outrage done to the Son of God, the great veil in the Temple, which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the room where the altar of incense stood from the room which the high priest entered but once in the year, on the great Day of Atonement, was torn into two parts, from the top to the bottom. That was a sign that sin, which till now had separated man from God, had now been taken away, done away with. No need of earthly mediators and priests to assure the believers of the mercy of God through the blood of calves and of goats, since our great Mediator and High Priest has entered into the most holy place of heaven and has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Every sinner may now, on the strength of Christ's sacrifice, freely come to God and depend upon the full redemption through His blood. The Roman centurion that had charge of the soldiers

guarding the cross was a witness of all the things that happened on and near Calvary. But the greatest impression was made upon him by the death of Jesus itself. Here was not a defeat, but a victory, as every one could see. He and those that were with him may often have heard the accounts of the Messiah of the Jews, of the fact that He was to be the Son of God and that He should bring salvation to His people. This occurrence opened his eyes; he now realized and frankly confessed: Truly, this Man was the Son of God. His heart had accepted Jesus as his Savior. At some distance were also standing some of the women that had made it their business to serve the Lord with the ministry of their hands. There was Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had driven seven devils, Mary, the mother of James the Smaller, or Younger, and of Josses, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of James and John. These women had quietly, but effectively served Jesus even when He was in Galilee, they had made the journey up to Jerusalem with Him, and were now the witnesses of His martyrdom. Note: When the called apostles flee from the Lord's side and hide, for fear of the Jews, the women show the greater courage. Also: It pleases the Lord very well when such ministry is rendered to Him; He has recorded the names of these women to their everlasting honor. Christian women that follow in their footsteps, in all humility, will not lack recognition from Him at the proper time.

The burial of Jesus: V. 42. **And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,** V. 43. **Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councilor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.** V. 44. **And Pilate marveled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.** V. 45. **And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.** V. 46. **And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.** V. 47. **And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, beheld where He was laid.** Although this day on which Jesus died, was a great festival day, on which the Jews also offered a second *chagigah*, or offering, combined with a meal, yet the following day, the Sabbath, was considered still more sacred. With reference to that, this Friday was merely the day of preparation. This day, however, was drawing to a close, evening was coming on. If something was to be done toward the burial of the Lord, it must be done at once. And here a new disciple of the Lord is mentioned, who till now had remained under cover. His name was Joseph, and his home town was Arimathea, or Ramah, 1 Sam. 1, 1. 19. He belonged to the great council, or Sanhedrin, of the Jews, but had taken no part in the blasphemous proceedings against Christ. Since help was not forthcoming from any other quarter, this man now threw off all fear and came forth boldly for his Lord. He was even then a believer, and he hoped for the speedy consummation of the kingdom of God, for its revelation before the whole world. Since time was an important factor, he acted accordingly. He dared to go in to Pilate and earnestly beg for the body of Jesus. Pilate was rather surprised that Jesus had died so soon, but after he had received the assurance from the centurion that He had died some time ago, quite a while before this interview, he gladly gave the body to Joseph for burial. Upon this permission Joseph could act. He purchased a fine linen gravecloth, took down the Lord's body with the aid of another disciple, Nicodemus, wrapped the body in the linen, and laid it in a grave which was hewn out of the stone, in a garden not far from Calvary. They then rolled a heavy stone before the door of the sepulcher, hurrying all the while lest the coming of the Sabbath interrupt their work of love. And during all this time Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, were present, watching carefully where and how their Master was being laid to rest. Thus Jesus, after His shameful death on the cross, still received an honorable burial. It was given Him by disciples that had formerly been too weak to confess their faith. It has often proved the case, in times of persecution and danger, that the weak became strong and the strong weak. Experienced Christians have deeply disappointed expectations, while others that were still weak in knowledge stood their ground firmly. And for us there is consolation also in the fact that Christ was laid into a grave. That fact has hallowed our graves. We need fear neither death nor the grave.

Those that fall asleep in Christ rest peacefully in their beds in the earth until the great day of the eternal Easter dawns.

Summary. *Jesus is brought to Pilate for trial, who unjustly condemns Him to death on the cross, after having vainly tried to release Him; He is mocked by the soldiers, led out to Golgotha, crucified between two criminals, reviled by the people, suffers the agony of hell, yields up His spirit to His Father, and is buried under the direction of Joseph of Arimathea.*

MARK CHAPTER 16.

[VIEW FOOTNOTES](#)

The Resurrection of Jesus. Mark 16, 1-8.

The women at the sepulcher: V. 1. **And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.** V. 2. **And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.** V. 3. **And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?** V. 4. **And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great.** The weekly Sabbath came to a close at sunset, whereupon the bazaars were quickly thrown open to take advantage of any trade that might happen along before complete darkness set in. The same women that had been present on Calvary, two of whom had been witnesses of Christ's burial, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, the wife of Zebedee, had, even on Friday evening, prepared such ointments and spices as they could find before the Sabbath was announced. They now made further purchases of sweet-smelling spices, in order to have everything ready against the morrow, for they intended to go out to the grave and anoint the body of their Master properly. Note: Here is a bit of evidence that there was no idea or intention in the minds of the disciples to steal the body of Jesus and falsely to allege that He had risen from the dead. The prophecies of Christ concerning this event had apparently been entirely forgotten for the time being. So early did the women start out from the city on the next morning, on the first of the Sabbath-days, the great day of the festival when the sheaves were offered to God in the Temple, that they arrived at the grave when the sun was rising. They seem to have had no knowledge of the presence of the soldiers or else not to have anticipated any difficulty on their account. But one fact was worrying them all the way out to the garden, and they spoke of it again and again -- the matter of the stone that had been rolled before the door of the sepulcher. It had taken at least two men to put it into place, and there was little chance of their removing it with their combined strength, for it was very great. "Rock-cut tombs, whether large or small, were regarded as important possessions.... To close a 'doorway' tomb securely must always have been a matter of difficulty in Palestine. It was not easy with the kind of locks they had to keep intruders out of tombs. This led to the cutting of a large groove by the side of the doorway into which a rolling-stone was fitted. When it was desired to open the tomb, the stone could be rolled back. The stones were too heavy to be easily disturbed. It was in a new tomb of this type that the body of Jesus was laid, and it was such a stone that the women found rolled away on the resurrection morning." 56) This was the first thing that the women looked for when they came in sight of the tomb, for by this time they could distinguish objects clearly. And the fact that the stone was rolled away from the tomb may have filled them with great fear and consternation, causing them to think, perhaps, of grave robbers. Mary Magdalene, at least, waited for nothing more, but turned at once and brought this version of the happening to the city, John 20, 1. 2. 15.

The message of the risen Lord: V. 5. **And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.** V. 6. **And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted; Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is**

not here; behold the place where they laid Him. V. 7. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. V. 8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid. While Mary Magdalene was hurrying back to the city, the other Mary and Salome, impelled by interested curiosity, went into the tomb through the open door. But here they received a great surprise, for they saw what appeared to them a young man clothed in a long white garment sitting on the right hand side. The presence of various angels on this Easter morning, at various times and in various positions, need not cause surprise. There must have been multitudes of them present, though only a few of them or a single one may have been visible at anyone time, such as had been specially delegated, as at the birth of Christ, to bring the Lord's message. But the appearance of this angel in the tomb greatly terrified the women. The reflection of the glorious light of heaven shone from the messenger's face and garment, and poor, sinful human beings cannot endure that splendor without flinching and becoming terrified. But the angel's message was intended to allay all fear: Be not terrified! As at the birth of the Savior the first words of the heavenly preacher were: Fear not, so the cheering cry went out at this time. The poor weak heart is inclined always to tremble, feeling the weight and the guilt of its sin. But there is no longer need of such trembling, there is no longer reason for fearing, since full and certain redemption lies before all men in the empty grave. The angel speaks of the Lord by the name which had been given Him to heap shame and reproach upon Him. But Jesus of Nazareth is now the name of which He Himself and all His followers are justly proud. As Jesus of Nazareth He hung on the cross, but as Jesus of Nazareth He also rose from the dead. The place where He lay is still there, the evidences of His having been buried are still to be seen; but He is risen from the dead. Mark the short, vivid method of speaking: He is risen, not is He here; see the place where they laid Him. All is joyful emotion, exultation which struggles for utterance. And the message is not for them alone, the kingdom of God cannot wait, there is work to be done in His interest, the news must be spread. They should tell His disciples and Peter the glorious tidings. And Peter: a direct mention of his name; Peter that had fallen so deeply, but who, as the Lord knew, had deeply repented of his sin; Peter who felt himself so utterly unworthy at this time, but who would yet feel the forgiving love of his resurrected Lord. As Jesus had told them, chapter 14, 28, He was now preparing to go, to precede them into Galilee; for there, at a place which He had designated to them, He wanted to speak to them. The effect of the angel's appearance and message upon the two women was overwhelming; the event was too much for them. They left the tomb, they fled away from the scene of such miracles; trembling and stupor, a kind of ecstasy bordering on hysteria, had taken hold of them. So great was their fear on that morning that for the present they said nothing to anyone. After their fears had been somewhat allayed, after they had heard that others had also received revelations independent of their testimony, they no longer were quiet about the wonderful things they had been and heard at the tomb.

The Appearances and the Ascension of Jesus. Mark 16, 9-20. 57)

The appearance to Mary Magdalene: **V. 9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. V. 10. And she went and told them that had been with Him as they mourned and wept. V. 11. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.** Just how highly Jesus thought of the women that had served Him so faithfully, especially during the last year and the closing weeks of His life, is evident from the fact that He appeared to one of these, to Mary Magdalene, first. The evangelist is here evidently summarizing the events of the forty days after the resurrection of Christ in his characteristically brief manner. He therefore does not give a full account of this meeting with Christ, as John did, 20, 14-18, but enumerates this appearance as one of many. And for the sake of the readers that were looking for distinguishing marks, he identifies Mary Magdalene as the woman out of whom Christ had driven seven devils. No sooner had Mary received this evidence of the Lord's resurrection than she hurried to tell it, not only to the apostles, but to all the disciples that were at

Jerusalem, who were now in bitter grief over their great loss. So deeply had the Passion and death of their Master affected these people that they simply refused to believe this eye-witness. Their hearts had not yet risen to an understanding of the prophecies of Christ concerning His resurrection, as often as He had tried to impress this fact upon their minds. Another bit of evidence against the theory of the Lord's stolen body.

The appearance to the Emmaus disciples: V. 12. **After that He appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country.** V. 13. **And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them.** This is undoubtedly a summary of the afternoon's events, as related by Luke, 24, 13-35. In a different form He came to them on the way, as these two were on their way to Emmaus, in an unusual dress or bearing, as is evident from Luke's remark that their eyes were holden. This second appearance should have convinced all of the disciples, not merely the apostles, though, for that matter, there were some that doubted even among them. But even now most of the rest, of the disciples at large, believed them not. That was the situation on the evening of Easter Day, in spite of an appearance to Peter that took place some time in the course of the day, and in spite of the joyful call of those that had gained the conviction of His having risen.

The appearance to the eleven: V. 14. **Afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.** V. 15. **And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.** V. 16. **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.** V. 17. **And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; V. 18. they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.** A still later revelation of Christ toward the end of the forty days. The evangelist is so brief in contracting his account that it is difficult to fix the exact time for every act and every word. It may also be assumed, without question, that the Lord spoke many more things to His disciples at the various appearances, of which we know nothing. In this case, He appeared while they were reclining, probably at a meal. At that time He spoke to them in a very serious manner, rebuking and chiding them very earnestly on account of their refusal to believe, which resulted from the hardness of their heart, when the message of His resurrection had been brought to them by such as had actually seen Him after He had risen. For all these accounts of credible witnesses, coming after the thorough instruction which He had given them on their private excursions, should have filled them with the most confident faith as to the fact of His resurrection. And here they had been hidden away in mortal fear of their lives, showing about as much trust in the almighty Lord as the average Christian when he is attacked by the unbelievers and seems in danger of persecution. "There was a faith and yet no faith; for they did not yet believe all, though they believed that God made heaven and earth and was the Creator of all. Therefore faith is a thing which always grows. The apostles, then, were not altogether without faith, for they had a piece of faith. It is with faith as with a person that has been sick and is on the way to recovery. Therefore the Lord states wherein they did not believe and what they still lacked; for that was the matter that they did not believe Christ's resurrection from the dead. Though they believed the other, yet this thing they lacked. For I presume they believed also that they had a gracious God; but that was not enough, since it was necessary also to believe the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For this reason the Lord chides them for their unbelief, rebukes them and says: Though they had seen everything, yet they did not believe, since this article of the resurrection was missing." 58)

Still He gave them His great commission. Going out into all the world, they should preach the Gospel to every creature. It is a most comprehensive command, it knows no limit. The Gospel, the message of salvation through the meritorious work, through the bitter suffering of Jesus, the Savior of the whole world is the only proclamation that has any authority and right in Christian pulpits. All other topics are

outside of the pale. Every sermon must serve in building the Church of Jesus Christ. For the test is faith in that Gospel and in nothing else. There may be ever so many creeds and cults in the world to-day, with philosophical systems and schemes for the social amelioration of mankind. Many of these may even have their value for effecting more wholesome conditions and improving the tone of a community. But they all are trash and worse than trash when it comes to the critical question: What must I do to be saved? For this there is only one answer: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Faith in Jesus Christ through the medium of the Gospel and a further confirming and accepting of the great benefits of Christ's salvation through the water of salvation, through Baptism, that is the only way to become sure of heaven and its bliss. The former is conceded by most people that profess adherence to the Bible and its truths, but the latter fact, salvation through the Sacrament of Baptism, is denied by many upon so-called reasonable grounds. "But there thou seest no work of men; for Baptism is not mine, but God's work. For he that baptizes me stands there in the stead of God, and does not perform a human work, but it is God's hand and work. Therefore I may and shall say thus: God, my Lord, has baptized me Himself by 'the hand of a man; of this I may boast and may depend upon it and say: God, who will not and cannot lie, has given me that sign, that I may be certain of His grace and that He wants to save me, having given me all that He has, through His Son. Thus there is on our side nothing but faith, and on His side only the Word and the sign." 59) Through this faith and in this Sacrament God actually gives salvation, assures us of the certainty of the heritage of heaven which is reserved for us. "That is indeed pleasant, friendly, consoling preaching, and is fitly called Gospel. For here hearest thou with one word: He shall be saved, heaven opened, hell closed, the Law and the sentence of God annulled, sin and death buried, and life and salvation placed into the bosom of the whole world, if they would but believe it. O that everyone could learn well but these two words -- 'believe' and 'be saved'! For though they are short and have few letters, yet they are such preaching and power as the world cannot comprehend, that such excellent grace and unspeakable treasure is given through preaching, altogether without our merit, for which we have done nothing, yea, knew nothing thereof." 60) But the other side of the question cannot be passed over in silence, for Christ's words are very impressive. Where there is no faith in the salvation of Jesus, damnation is sure to follow. "As the former sentence in one word opens heaven, closes hell, annuls Moses and the terrors of the Law for all that believe: so this part is a strong sentence and in turn with one word closes heaven, opens hell wide, makes Moses with his Law an unendurable tyrant and the devil a mighty lord to all that do not believe. Nothing will help against it; though thou shouldst be zealous to death for the Law, as the Jews were or Paul before his conversion; though thou become a monk or a nun; though thou permit thyself to be tortured and burned, yet shall the verdict be: If thou believest not in Christ, thou must go into the fire of hell, be eternally damned, and death will be an eternal, almighty dungeon over thee." 61)

It was a responsible commission which the Lord entrusted to His disciples. And therefore He cheers and strengthens them by the assurance of special signs, miracles, or powers, with which He will accompany their work: In His name to cast out devils; to speak with new, that is, unknown languages; to pick up serpents without danger to themselves; to drink poison which might be offered to them to kill them, with no evil effects; to lay their hands upon invalids of all kinds and restore them to health. All these miraculous things actually did take place in the history of the Church. During the early days it was especially necessary that the power of God in the apostles and all Christians be evidenced in such a manner; but the power of God is just as mighty to-day as ever, and there are thousands of miracles being done in His name wherever the Gospel is being proclaimed. "Thus even in our days and always such great signs and wonders upon wonders are being performed in this, that any city or any small body or assembly of Christians still remains in true knowledge of God and in faith; since there are more than a hundred thousand devils directed against her, and the world is full of sects and scoundrels and tyrants; yet the Gospel, Baptism, Eucharist, confession of Christ is retained without their thanks, to make it evident that for the heathen He must have given external signs which people could see before

their eyes and grasp them. But the Christians must have much higher heavenly signs than those earthly ones....Therefore we should indeed praise and glorify the great and glorious, wonderful deeds which Christ does daily in Christendom, that they conquer the devil's might and power and tear so many souls out of the mouth of death and hell....Where a heart, therefore, in spite of the terror of death and sin and hell, cheerfully dies in the faith in Christ, there he is truly cast out of his seat and dwelling, and his power and kingdom is weakened and taken from him." 62) The warning which Luther adds in one of his sermons on this text concerning false miracles and such as are done without God's sanction, often with the aid of powers which have nothing in common with Him, is very timely even to-day. Even if it were possible for a person to perform deeds that had all the external marks of true miracles, the promise and command of God is not there. The Gospel and the Sacraments are the means by which the Christian Church is to carry forward the work of the Savior till the end of time.

The ascension of Christ: V. 19. **So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.** V. 20. **And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Amen.** At the end of the time which He had set for Himself, forty days after His resurrection, after He had given His disciples all the instructions which they needed for their work, He was taken up into heaven, He ascended into the glory of the heavens, and He sat down at the right hand of God, He now, according to His human nature, as our brother according to the flesh, occupies the place at God's right hand. He has full dominion over all creatures in heaven and earth and under the earth. With this assurance the disciples went forth. They preached the Gospel everywhere, in all places, throughout the world that was then known. And Christ worked with them; they did not stand alone, but had Him at their side always, in their entire ministry. And wherever a confirmation of the Gospel was necessary in the form of some external sign, such miracle was forthcoming, according to His promise. Christ's presence is with those that preach the pure Gospel to-day as surely as it ever was. If our faith but trust in Him, the great Champion of His Church, who works in and with us, and therefore in and with the Gospel, then the great miracles which He has always performed through His Word will be done to-day as they ever were: Hearts polluted beyond all resemblance to human hearts will be made whiter than snow; souls that were lost and sold into the power of the devil will be redeemed and be given the liberty of the children of God; people whose entire nature is sick with the fearful disease of sin will be made whole and strong to fight the Lord's battles, all through the power of the Gospel. And the Lord's hand has not waxed short with reference to other miracles, which are fully obvious to all that have open eyes.

Summary. *The resurrection of Jesus is announced to the women by an angel; Christ appears to several persons and finally to the apostles, to whom He gives the great missionary command, assuring them, incidentally, of His cooperation and support in the preaching of the Gospel until the end of time.*