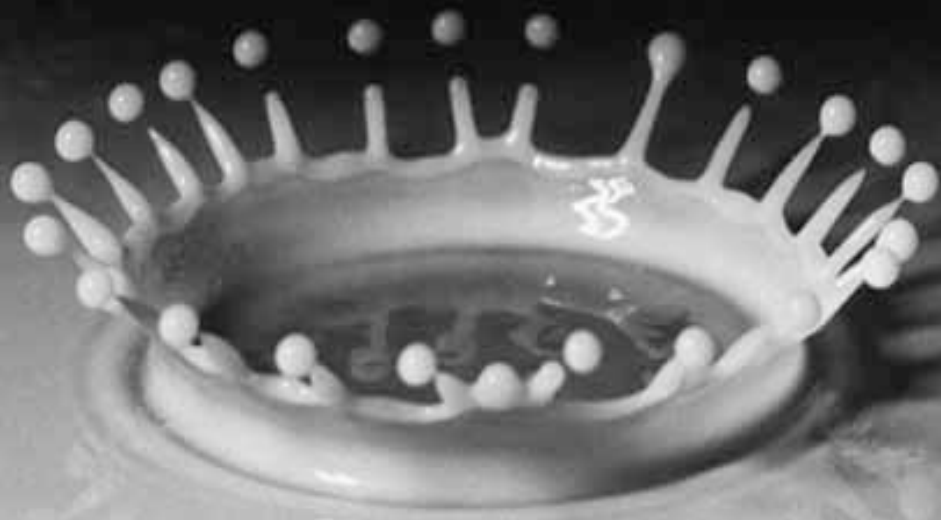
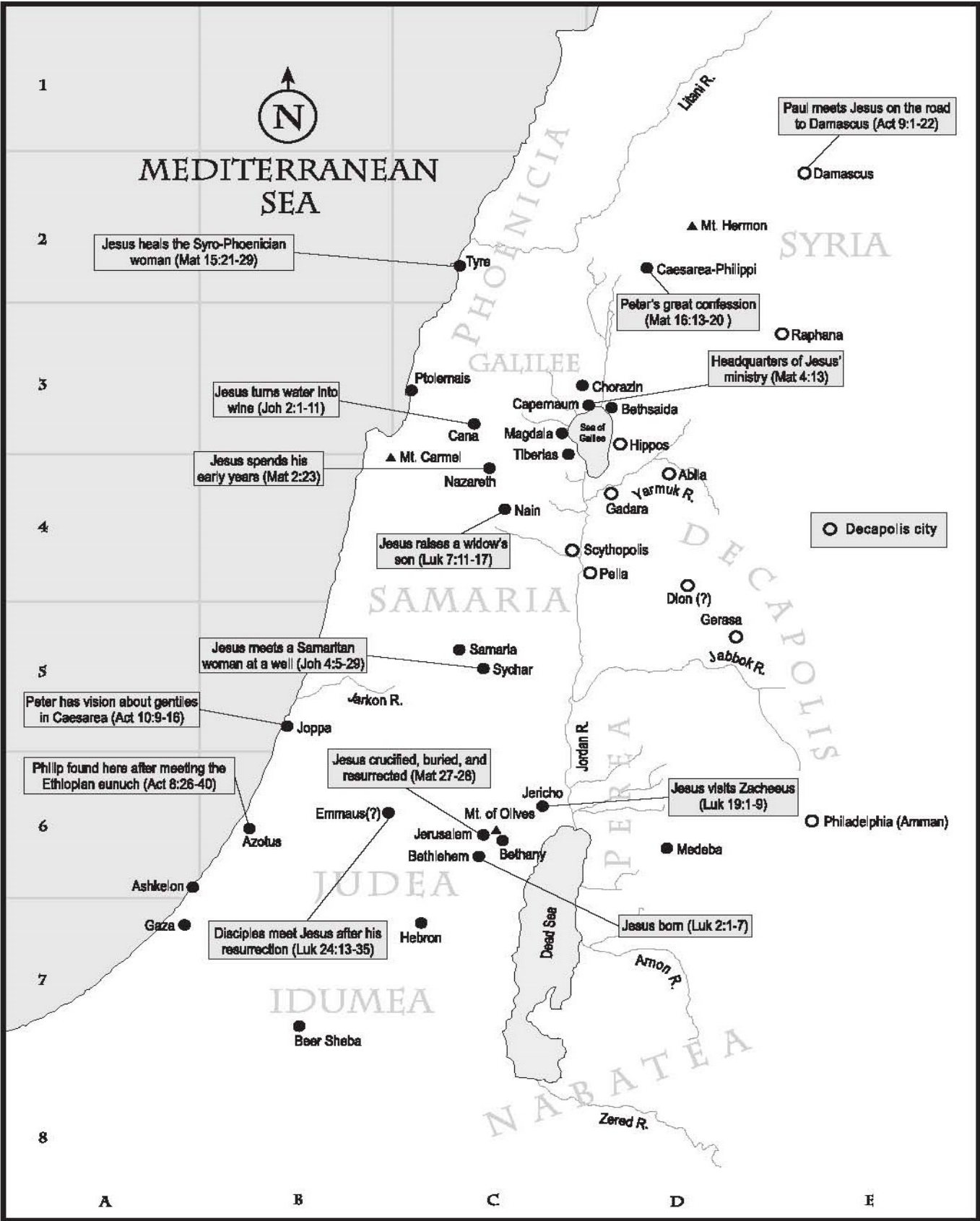


# THE KING IS COMING

MARK 9-16



# ISRAEL IN THE TIME OF JESUS



# INTRODUCTION

What are we reading as we read Mark's Gospel? Does that seem like an obvious question? Obviously, we're reading about the life of Jesus. But we're reading about his life from **the point of view of the author**.

What we're NOT reading is a blow-by-blow historical account of the life of Jesus from the day he was born until the day he returned to heaven. Mark **CHOOSES** what he wants to write about, and he **ORDERS** these events according to his purpose.

Above all, Mark is writing a **STORY**. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't mean that Mark is writing **FICTION**. But his story has a plot, and characters, and all the other things that a story has.

We need to read Mark's gospel like we would read a good book. How do the characters develop? What is the plot? What are the themes? What movement is there in location? What movement is there in attitudes of people?

What does all of this tell us about Jesus, the centre of the story?

This means that we perhaps need to read the book differently to the way we've read it before. Rather than just read one small section, we need to read whole chapters, or more, and ask ourselves how the parts fit together.

How does the plot develop over the whole passage? How does this section fit with those before and after it? Is there a coherent theme in the section?

Sometimes these aren't easy questions to answer, and mostly there's no way of knowing for sure whether we're right. But as we think about these questions, we often find that we are discovering exciting new things about Jesus!

# MARK 9:14-10:31: WANTED KINGDOM KIDS

*(This study is longer than the next one. If you don't finish, you can finish it next week)*

The Transfiguration paints a dramatic picture of Jesus' identity. This next section describes what it means to follow such a Messiah, and to listen to him (9:7).

The people of the kingdom are characterised by prayerful faith (9:14-29), servant hearts (9:33-50), satisfaction with God's order (10:1-12), and are not greedy (10:17-27). God will bless such people now and eternally (10:29-31)

1. **Read Mark 9:14-32.** How does this section connect to the previous section (9:2-13)? How does it contrast with the previous section?
2. What scene confronted Jesus when he came down from the mountain? What do you think the argument was about? Why might the people have been overwhelmed with wonder at the sight of Jesus?
3. Who was Jesus rebuking in v19? How is this comment explained by Jesus interactions with the boy's father (21-24), and with the disciples (28-29)?
4. What motivates Jesus to cast out the spirit (24-27)?
5. How does his interaction with his disciples contrast with that of the crowds (25-32)? How are the disciples measuring up?
6. **Read Mark 9:33-50.** Is there a basic attitude in the disciples that Jesus is correcting here? How is true greatness measured in the Kingdom?
7. What is ironic about 9:38-41 (see 9:18)?
8. What is Jesus' priority in 9:42-50? How might these commands to the disciples be a response to their attitudes in 33-41?

**Read Mark 10:1-12.** Jesus is now under Herod Antipas' jurisdiction. It was for rebuking Herod's divorce and remarriage that John the Baptist was executed. This may explain the Pharisee's "testing" of Jesus.

In Deut 24:1-4 Moses seeks to regulate the practice of divorce to reduce hardship on divorced wives. He doesn't legalise it. Jesus points to God's actual intention for marriage. He isn't drawn into the Pharisees' trap.

9. Notice how this section on divorce is between two sections on children. Any thoughts on how it connects to them?

10. **Read Mark 10:13-31.** How have the disciples “got it wrong” in this study so far? How do they get it wrong in vv 13-16? What does it mean to receive the kingdom like a little child? How can WE keep doing that each day?
11. How does the rich young man (vv 17-31) contrast with the children (vv 13-16)?
12. What does Jesus promise to those who leave what they have to follow Jesus? What is Jesus saying to YOU in vv 29-31?
13. Summarise what this section teaches about what a disciple of Jesus looks like.

## **Prayer Points:**

# MARK 10:32-52: EYES WIDE SHUT

1. Jesus is heading for Jerusalem. Using a map of Israel, plot his movements from 6:1, 46; 7:24, 31; 8:22, 27; 9:33; 10:1, 32.
2. As Jesus moves toward Jerusalem, he becomes more open to the disciples about what will happen there (8:31; 9:31; 10:32 ff). How do these two strategies of the author (describing traveling towards Jerusalem and repeatedly warning the disciples) help to build suspense?
3. **Read 10:32-52.** Why were the disciples astonished, and the other followers afraid? What hints has the author already given us? (See 3:6; 7:1)
4. From vv 35-40, do you think that the disciples understand Jesus' prediction concerning his death? (See also 9:30-35)
5. What is the cup Jesus will drink? (See 14:36) How is "baptism" used in these verses? (see Lk 12:50)
6. Were the other ten disciples any better than James and John?
7. What is Jesus' kingdom like? (See 42-45) What does this mean practically? When do you find yourself wanting "the best seat in the house"?
8. In what sense did Jesus give his life as a "ransom"?
9. As Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem, what is significant about the title Bartimaeus uses to address Jesus (v 47)? How does his faith differ from the crowd's?
10. How does Bartimaeus contrast with the disciples? Can you see any clues that the writer wants us to compare the two episodes (eg compare v36 and v51)?
11. Why didn't Jesus command them not to tell anyone about the miracle (like in 1:43; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36)?

## Prayer Points:

# MARK 11: THE KING IS IN THE HOUSE

1. **Read Mark 11:1-11.** Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem – King David’s city. How does his entrance compare with the entrance you would expect of an earthly king? See also Zech 9:8-10.

How does Jesus’ entrance support his teaching about the way his kingdom operates (in 9:33-37; 10:42-45)

3. Look at what the people shouted (v 9-10). Verse 9 is a quote from Psalm 118. How is this Psalm a fitting one for the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem?
4. What is significant about his first stop in Jerusalem (v 11)? What does it say about his type of kingship?
5. **Read 11:12-33.** The clearing of the temple is “sandwiched” between the two parts of the fig tree episode. Why? What is Mark saying?

What is Jesus doing by cursing the fig tree? Was he too silly to know it was the wrong season for figs, and then so angry that he took it out on the fig tree?

7. The profiteering by the sale of animals took place in the only area where Gentiles could worship. Why would this especially anger Jesus? (see Is 56:6-8) What does this event show us about Jesus?
8. What does this story (vv 12-19), and 9:42 show you about what most angers Jesus? How might this relate to your religious actions?
9. What conditions does Jesus list for effective prayer? In light of how Jesus uses power, what other conditions may there be?
10. What are your major prayer requests now? How do they measure up to these conditions?
11. Why are the priests and teachers concerned with Jesus’ authority? (v27-28) What are “these things”?
12. By asking a question about John, Jesus deflected attention from himself. Who does he imply his own authority comes from?

## Prayer Points:

# MARK 12: FOUR BIG QUESTIONS

1. **Read Mark 12:1-12.** How does this parable connect to the previous section? What is the meaning of the parable? Look at Isaiah 5 for an Old Testament parallel.
2. How does Jesus' quote from Psalm 118 (12:10-11) fit with the crowd's shouting in 11:9-10?
3. How does the parable produce the very effect it was describing? (12:12)
4. **Read 12:13-44.** All of 11:27-12:44 seems to take place on one day in the temple. How would you summarise the day?  
  
11:12-19  
  
11:27-33  
  
12:1-12  
  
12:13-17  
  
12:18-27  
  
12:28-34  
  
12:35-37
6. Why is the praise of Jesus from the Pharisees (v14) ironic? See v12 and 11:32
7. How does the interaction in 12:28-34 differ from the others?
8. What is Jesus' judgment on the religious leaders after his "chess game" (see v38-44)
9. What connection can you see between v38-40 and v41-44? What is Jesus' point in these last verses?

## Prayer Points:



# MARK 13: WHAT'S THE TIME?

*This is probably the most difficult passage to understand in Mark's Gospel. It seems to be so different from the verses around it. Get ready to work hard in this study!*

1. **Read Mark 13:1-4.** How is this section connected to the previous section? From Ch 12, is Jesus anti-temple, or anti-leadership?

Psalms like **Psalms 48** encourage Jews to tour Jerusalem and appreciate its construction. This would support their faith that God would not desert them. It is possible that the disciples were trying to encourage Jesus with this thought. However, Jesus responds that the temple will soon suffer God's judgment, as he promised (Daniel 9:26). (In reality, Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans, under Titus. He desecrated the temple by burning a pig on the altar.)

2. How do the disciples respond to Jesus' statement? What event(s) do you think they are asking about?
3. **Read 13:5-37.** How would you summarise Jesus' answer? What event(s) do you think Jesus is describing?

There are three basic opinions to this question (+ combinations of these);

- View 1: Jesus is describing **the immediate events** after his ascension including Pentecost, persecution of the Christians, and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.
- View 2: Jesus is describing the events leading up to **his second coming**.
- View 3: A relatively recent view is that Jesus is talking primarily about **his death, resurrection and ascension**.

Note: Whatever events Jesus is describing, notice that he identifies three time periods.

*Time Period 1:*

Verses 5-23 describe a situation of terrible turmoil, when the disciples will find themselves suffering on Jesus' behalf. They will see 'the abomination that causes desolation' which will result in the greatest distress of all time. They will be tempted to move away from following Jesus (21-23)

*Time Period 2:*

Verses 24-26 describe the time 'following that distress' when the Son of Man will arrive.

*Time Period 3:*

Verse 27 describe the time after that – 'THEN he will send his messengers' (not in NIV, but in the Greek, RSV, NASB, and KJV). This is when the harvest of the elect in all the world will occur.

4. What event have we been waiting for since Mark began his story (see Mark 1:15)? How does Jesus understand the kingdom of God? (See Mark 4:11, 26, esp. 9:1; 9:47; 10:14; 23-25; 14:25)

Old Testament Jews had been waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God (also described as "The day of the LORD"). They expected a time when God would judge the nations, and bring in a new order of things, often to do with the Messiah arriving (eg Dan 2:44; 7:13-14) or with spectacular signs (see Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10). This seems to be what the disciples were inquiring about in 13:4.

5. What evidence can you find in this chapter for each of the three positions above. Look, for example, at the following verses;

9:

10: *(It is likely that “first” here means “as your highest priority”, rather than “prior in time”)*

11:

14: *(This is a quote from Daniel 9, and Jesus seems to be saying that the readers of the book of Daniel should now be able to understand what it is talking about)*

24-25:

26-27: *(just to add to the confusion, the Greek word for “coming” ἐρχόμενον means “going” as well as “coming”.)*

*(Does Acts 1:9 and Acts 2 have any similarities with 13:24-27?)*

30:

35-36:

It's tricky isn't it!? Now you can see why people disagree!

Mark 9:1 and 14:25 seem to suggest (to me at least) that Jesus saw that his impending death (and resurrection) would start the kingdom of God. He knew it was coming (8:31 ff; 9:30 ff; 10:32 ff), but he just didn't know when (13:32).

Many of the things he warns the disciples about in Ch 13 are to do with the events that occur immediately after he returns to heaven, when the Holy Spirit will come (13:11), and the gospel will be spread (13:10). His burden seems to be to get the disciples ready for things that will happen SOON.

Mk 13:30 is a very difficult verse to explain if you hold View 2. Such people interpret “this generation” to refer to all Christians from the time of Jesus until His second coming.

References to when the Son of Man “comes” (8:38; 13:26; 14:62) are normally taken to be referring to the SECOND coming, but if Jesus viewed his death, resurrection, and ascension as when the Kingdom would come (9:1), then these verses can be interpreted as meaning “when the time for the Son of Man to be declared/appointed arrives”, or “when the Son of Man is revealed.” In other words, the kingdom arrives when the Son of Man arrives at his resurrection/ascension.

Such an interpretation helps to support View 3 (above).

6. Take a closer look at Mk 13:35-37. It warns the disciples (and us) to look out for the kingdom. How do the following events in the rest of Mark connect to these verses?

14:17:

14:34:

14:37-38

14:72

15:1:

*(Is Mark highlighting them because of how they connect to Jesus' warnings in 13:35-37?)*

7. Look, also, at the following references from Mk 13 and compare them to the narrative in Chapters 14-16.

13:12

14:21

13:16

14:51-52

13:19

14:34 or 15:34

*(Does Mark mention these observations because he believes that Jesus is referring to his arrest and death in 13:14-23?)*

Probably this study won't have answered all your questions. Probably you will have more questions now than when you started! But that's ok! Keep reading and thinking about God's Word – it will take a life time... and more.

Don't let this study unsettle you! Despite the things we're not certain of, you can be confident that

- Jesus IS coming back – whether this chapter teaches us about it or not
- You CAN confidently read your Bible by yourself without a theological degree. MOST of the Bible is much clearer than this. And that's a miracle considering how far removed we are from the world of the people who first wrote down God's words.
- God knows what the future holds, and what this chapter is about, even if we don't!

## **Prayer Points:**

# MARK 14:1-42: HOW CAN I SAY THANK YOU?

1. Read Mk 14:1-11. At the start of Ch 14 how does Mark bring us back from the future of Ch 13 to the present situation of Jesus vs. the leaders?
2. What can we assume that Jesus has done for his host (v3)? What has Jesus done for the woman? (See John 12:3 where we find out that she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and also Jn 11)
3. What was the attitude of some of the guests? How did it compare to that of the woman?
4. How does Jesus respond? How does his answer (about his death, and the gospel) tie in with previous chapters?
5. These verses start and finish on a dark note. The beauty of the woman's gratitude compare dramatically with the darkness of the priests and Judas' response. What might have motivated Judas to betray Jesus at this point?
6. How does Mark introduce the episode about the preparation for Jesus' death (14:12)? What comparison might he be drawing? [If you're unfamiliar with what the Passover Feast was about, check out Exodus 12:1-28]
7. What arrangements does Jesus organise for the Passover? What indications are there that Jesus knows what is going to happen?
8. What new meaning does Jesus give to the Passover bread and wine?
9. To what time do you think Jesus is referring in v25?
10. How does Peter see himself in relation to the other disciples in v 27-31?
11. What did Jesus desire most of all? Yet how does he pray? Why?
12. Why does Jesus specifically urge Peter to watch and pray?
13. Why don't the disciples share the same sense of urgency to pray as Jesus? How many times do they sleep? Have they understood his warnings in Ch 13? (see esp. 13:36-37)

In v41-42, Jesus realises that the preparations for his sacrifice are over – on the same day that the Preparations are made for the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. His blood will soon be poured out for many. Spend some time thanking Jesus for his obedience.

## Prayer Points:

# MARK 14:43-72: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. **Read Mark 14:43-72.** Why do you think the crowd were armed?

How did this misunderstand Jesus' mission?

2. Why do you think Judas had pre-arranged the signal to identify Jesus?
3. Why didn't the leaders arrest Jesus in the temple? (See 12:12; 14:1-2)
4. What evidence do the religious leaders initially seek against Jesus?

Why do you think that, for the most part, Jesus remained silent?

On what evidence is Jesus finally found guilty? Of what crime?

The High Priest's question in v61 seems to come from the Jewish expectation (from Psalm 2) that God's Messiah/ Christ/ Anointed One would be declared God's Son at the time the Kingdom of God was established. Jesus answers (v62) that He is the one who fulfills that expectation, and that His "coming" signals the coming of the Kingdom.

5. What event do you think Jesus was referring to in v62?

Is this the same event he describes in 13:26-27?

6. In 12:38-40 Jesus declares that the leaders will be judged and punished for their actions. How does this section provide evidence for the accuracy of Jesus' assessment?
7. Parallel with Jesus' questioning is Peter's questioning. What comparisons can you make?

Why might Peter have denied Jesus in the courtyard if he'd been brave enough to follow him there?

8. When have you been tempted to deny Jesus? Or at least remain silent when you could have spoken?

Take heart- our security depends on Jesus' faithfulness, not ours!

## Prayer Points:

# MARK 15: THE KING OF THE JEWS

**Read Mark 15:1-20.** This section marks the end of the Jewish trial and the start of the Roman trial. 15:1 provides the fourth time marker Jesus warned us to look for (see 13:35). The owner of the house could return at any of these times (in other words, the Kingdom could arrive at any time). See 14:17, 32-42 (no specific time mentioned rather than “the hour”), 14:72, and 15:1. The owner hasn’t arrived yet. Should we be expecting the Kingdom any moment?

1. What do we learn about the character of Pilate from this interaction?
2. Why was Pilate amazed?
3. What conclusion does Pilate reach about Jesus’ guilt? What course of action does he decide on? Why?
4. What evidence can you find for Roman mocking of both the Jews and Jesus in the actions of the soldiers and Pilate?
5. What is ironic about the soldiers’ behaviour?
6. **Read Mark 15:21-47.** What ironies can you find here: in the places occupied by the robbers (see 10:37)?

In the call for Jesus to come down from the cross?

In the sign above the cross?

7. Why, in v34, does Jesus echo the call from Psalm 22?
8. Why is the curtain torn in two (v38)?
9. What causes the centurion to identify Jesus as the Son of God?
10. Why are the three women identified as witnesses of Jesus’ death? (See 16:1-8)
11. What do we learn about Joseph of Arimathea? What is significant about what he was waiting for? Would he have long to wait?
12. Some people today claim that Jesus wasn’t really dead, and that he was later revived by the coolness of the tomb. What evidence do you find here that Jesus was really dead?
13. Read Isaiah 53. Spend some time thinking and praying about Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. Think about how much he loved us, and how obedient he was to his Father.

## Prayer Points:

# MARK 16: THE GREAT OMISSION

The New Testament we have today is the result of the work of thousands of Christian scholars who, from about AD 60 until the invention of the printing press, copied various manuscripts by hand. The original Greek copies were also translated into other languages such as Latin, Syriac, and Armenian. The oldest copies are written on fragile papyrus. After this, stronger parchment or vellum (animal skin) was used. Many thousands of these copies and translations are preserved in museums, libraries, and universities around the world.

Although the original manuscript which Mark wrote is no longer present, we have several fragments of copies from the second and third centuries AD, and complete copies of the New Testament from the fourth century. Single books were copied at first onto rolls of papyrus but this proved cumbersome. By the second century, single sheets written on both sides were bound together to form books.

Although tremendous care was taken when copying the texts, unfortunately the process is like an enormous game of Chinese whispers. As each successive copy was made the chances grew that someone would make a mistake. Once this happened, every copy after that would also contain the mistake (plus any new ones).

Sometimes the changes were deliberate – like here at the end of Mk 16. It is likely that sometime before the fourth century someone decided either that Mark hadn't finished the story properly, or (more likely) that the original ending had been lost. He decided to add his own ending – perhaps an existing summary of the things Jesus did after his resurrection.

When scholars have copies which are different from each other, they must decide from the copies what the original manuscript said. Various rules are used to help them in this process. The most obvious of these rules is that "the older the manuscript, the more likely that it's correct". This is like the rule of Chinese whispers –the people who are early in the chain are more likely to have the correct message than later people. Another rule is that the correct reading is the one which can most easily explain how the other readings arose.

When it comes to Mk 16, people argue this second rule differently. Some argue that the LONG version is original, and this ending was LOST from some copies. Others argue that the SHORT ending is original, and someone ADDED the long ending later to "finish it off". Notice how this rule is applied two paragraphs above here.

Nearly all scholars today agree that the older manuscripts don't contain verses 9-20. They also use as evidence that the content and vocabulary of these verses is significantly different from Mark, and that the continuity between the two sections isn't smooth.

(Look also at Jn 7:53-8:11 for a similar situation)

This study will assume that Mk 16:9-20 are not part of Mark's original book, and therefore not part of God's word.

1. Read Mk 16:1-8. If the book of Mark ends at v8, why does this seem like an unexpected and unusual way to finish?

The spices were to prevent the body from smelling as it decomposed, rather than for preserving it. The stone was rolled into a rut carved especially for it. While it was relatively easy to move the stone into its rut, once there, it was very difficult to move.

2. Why did the women wait until Sunday morning to go back to the tomb?

3. What does the angel tell the women? Is this unexpected news for those of us who have been reading carefully? (See 8:31-32; 9:31; 10:33-34; 10:45; 12:8; 14:28)
4. How did the women react? Did they obey the angel? Although this is the end of Mark's story, was this the end of the story?
5. Why do you think they were specifically told to include Peter? What does this tell you about Jesus' plans for Peter?
6. The book seems to finish abruptly, and on a negative note. There is no actual sighting of Jesus recorded – only the word of the angel. Why might Mark have finished his story this way?
7. One of Jesus' expectations on his followers was that they would preach the gospel to all nations (13:9-13). How might Mark, by this abrupt ending, be shifting the responsibility for this task onto those who would later read his book?
8. Who did Jesus send to you to tell you he had risen? Spend some time thanking God for that person.
9. What lessons have you learned about Jesus from your study of Mark? How will you live differently for Jesus as a result of what you've learned?

## **Prayer Points:**