

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## Gospels

### March 18: Mark 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for March 18

Mark 1-2

Even though Mark never names himself, he was consistently given credit for this book by the early church writers. Mark's mother owned a house in Jerusalem large enough for the church to meet (Acts 12:12). Peter may have been a regular visitor, based on a servant girl recognizing his voice through a door, and called Mark his son (1 Peter 5:13). This common phrase may indicate that Peter baptized him. Mark's cousin was Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), which may be why he was invited to go with Paul on his first journey. Because Mark returned home before the trip was barely started, Paul did not want to take him on the next one. Barnabas lobbied for his cousin, but Paul was unmoved. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark as they went in different directions (Acts 16:36-41). However, Mark appears to be with Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24). Paul also sends specifically for Mark toward the end of his life calling him "useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). This would indicate that Mark had regained Paul's trust and that Timothy knew him as well.

Mark begins his account with quotations from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 which speak about someone preparing the way for the Messiah. He then gives a description of John and his work, including the baptism of Christ, followed by a very brief account of Satan tempting Christ in the wilderness. Mark does not spend any time discussing Jesus birth or early years. Instead, he seems determined to get right to the work of the Messiah including an account of Peter, Andrew, James and John being called by Him.

Mark describes those at Capernaum being astonished at the authority he seemed to hold when he taught. When he casts an unclean spirit out of a man (even seeming to have a conversation with the spirit itself) they are amazed and His fame begins to spread.

Upon entering the house of Simon (Peter), whose mother-in-law was ill, He heals her. The next thing you know the whole city is bringing their sick and afflicted to Him to be healed. In the morning, well before daylight, he goes off by himself to pray. They finally find Him, indicating that the town is looking for Him, and he announces that they are leaving to go to other cities. This takes Him all through the area of Galilee.

Jesus encounters a man with leprosy. When the man expresses his confidence in Jesus ability to heal him, Jesus does. He tells the man not to tell anyone. I am not sure how someone cured of leprosy could go unnoticed, but it doesn't matter. The man tells anyone within earshot what happened. Now Jesus cannot openly go into a city because of the crowds He is gathering. Instead, He stays outside of the cities and the people come to Him from everywhere.

When He goes back to Capernaum, the crowds grow very large around the house He was in. When the friends of a lame man cannot get through the door, they open an area of the roof and lower him in by ropes. Jesus tells him that his sins are forgiven. The scribes that are there began thinking that only God can forgive sins. Without them saying a word out loud, Jesus addresses their contemplation. He comments that it would be easy for Him to say the man's

sins are forgiven. How could you prove that? So, to show them His power, He heals the man of his physical issues.

When He leaves the city to go to the Sea of Galilee, many follow Him. He sees Matthew (Levi) collecting taxes and tells him to follow and he does. When He has supper at Matthew's house, there are many other tax collectors there. These may have been Matthews's friends and co-workers because no self-respecting Jew would have ever entered a tax collectors house to eat. When the Jewish religious leadership questions this, Jesus tells them that it is the sick that need a doctor. Those that sin need repentance.

When Jesus is asked about why His disciples are not fasting like the followers of John and the followers of the Pharisees, he has an interesting statement. He says that the friends of the bridegroom don't fast while the bridegroom is present. The main comment I will make is to note is that Jesus is referring to Himself as the Bridegroom. The church is not established yet, but Jesus is already laying the foundation of the marriage described in Revelation given to John.

As Jesus and his followers are walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath, they pick some of the grain. The Pharisees are appalled and claim they are violating the Law of Moses. Jesus points out that David and his men ate the showbread that was only for the priests, when they were desperately hungry, without penalty. He points out that the Sabbath was made for man. It was put in place to help and teach man. Instead, the Pharisees had put so many restrictions in place that it seemed like man was a servant to the Sabbath.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! I especially appreciated the history you wrote in the first paragraph. It's good for us to make these connections, see the big picture, and not just think about the chapters assigned. A few comments... 1.) I think it's fascinating that Mark begins the book with the prophecy of Isaiah. Truly, John the Baptist played a significant role in preparing the way for Jesus. Through him all men might believe in Jesus (John 1:7). What John the Baptist testified was true: John 10:41, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man (Jesus) was true." 2.) Mark mentions Jesus was with the wild animals in the desert. I think he's the only gospel writer who reports their presence. It's interesting and helps emphasize God kept Jesus safe during these 40 days.

### **Replies:**

Ginger Hermon:

Also, to confirm, Mark is the first gospel that was written, correct?

## **March 25: Mark 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)**

March 25, 2017 Reading

Mark 3-4

After picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus goes to a Synagogue and sees a man with a withered hand. He knows that the Pharisees are watching closely, so He asks them if you should do good or evil on the Sabbath and proceeded to heal the man.

The Pharisees begin trying to figure out how to get rid of Jesus. He leaves Jerusalem and goes to Galilee. People begin arriving from all over. He has His disciples make sure that a boat is ready for them to use if the crowds put them in danger because of their desire to get close to Him.

Jesus hand selects the 12 apostles from His disciples. His plan is to send them out to preach with the power to heal and cast out demons. He gave them this power so they would have proof that their message was from God.

The crowds become so overwhelming that they cannot go about daily tasks, like eating. When those that knew Him when He was younger hear what is going on, they try to get ahold of Him because they think He is crazy.

The scribes try to claim that He is doing all these things because He is serving Satan. Jesus gathers them to discuss this accusation. He points out that it is not logical that Satan would work against himself. If Satan was doing that, he would be defeating his own purpose and building up his enemy. Jesus then makes a very strong accusation against them. He tells them that they are committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and that it will not be forgiven. This particular sin seems to only be possible when someone has evidence that something has happened by the power of God but attributes it to Satan. We know from other passages that many of the Jewish religious leaders believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but did not voice that belief openly because of fear. It is definitely possible that some of these men recognized the power of God, but tried to mislead the people by convincing them that it was from Satan.

When Jesus' mother, Mary, and His brothers arrive, everyone points out to Him that they are here. They may have been among those that were trying to escort Him away because they questioned His sanity. Instead of acknowledging their relationship, He points out that His family is anyone who does the will of God. It is worth noting that Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, is not mentioned. It may be that he simply does not come, but the omission of Him in other accounts during this part of Jesus' life would indicate that Joseph had died.

Jesus now gets into the boat so He can teach those that are along the shore. He tells them the parable of the sower. Not understanding this teaching, the apostles ask Him about the meaning. He points out that the Word of God touches many different hearts. Some are not receptive at all. Others are receptive, but they either lose interest or the distractions of the world get in the way. However, some hearts are receptive and the word grows to produce fruit.

He also tells them the parable of the lamp. It does no good to light the lamp and then cover it up. It should be put on a pedestal to give maximum coverage for the light. He uses this opportunity to warn that we should be careful how we judge others. Whatever standard we use, we should be willing to judge ourselves by.

Jesus also points out that the kingdom of God grows even though we might not completely understand how. He compares it to a farmer that plants the crop, but does not control the growth. The farmer simply cares for and watches the crop until it is time for the harvest. We, too, cannot control the growth of the church. We can simply plant, care for and watch with the knowledge that one day there will be a harvest. He also compares it to a mustard seed. It may start off small and humble, but it grows into a mighty plant.

Jesus decides they need to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They are spread out among several boats. While they are crossing, a storm forms. While everyone else is panicking as they fear for their lives, Jesus is asleep. They wake Him up while asking, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" What a question to ask Jesus, especially after all the miracles they had personally witnessed. Jesus simply stands up and says, "Peace, be still!" Amazingly, the storm,

even the wind, completely and totally stops. Jesus connects their fear to a lack of faith. If they had faith in the power of Christ, which they had seen with their own eyes, they would not have been afraid at all.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:  
Mark 3:25 "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." (Not only today's Bible reading but also summative statement of this week in politics. :)

### **Replies:**

Kevin Crittenden:  
Politics is a house that I cannot stand.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
Thanks, Doug! I can hear your voice as I read each Saturday's gospel summary. It's a great encouragement. <3 A few things that triggered my thoughts... The crowds became so overwhelming. This is an important statement! Even non-Christian contemporary writers give this description for Jesus (multitude of followers). This provides evidence! Another thing that really hit me was thinking of Jesus quoting Isaiah. As mentioned last night, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in Isaiah exactly. Finally, last thing I'll mention is only Mark records the parable in 4:26-29. I appreciated your thoughts on this. The mysterious power of the seed - The Word - is emphasized. While we, God's Kingdom, may be oblivious to how God makes the seed grow, we are called to lead people to repentance and obedience to God. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) As well, we are called to be reapers in God's harvest. "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:37-38)

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:  
A theme Mark highlights more than the other gospels is the weakness, slowness, failures of the disciples. Perhaps Mark's own less than stellar early experience as a helper to Barnabas and Saul sharpened his insight into understanding that all disciples need to know that even Jesus chosen ones had such problems.

Mark 4:39-41 (NIV)

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Notice the fear wasn't over when the squall ended. Notice the very strong word, "terrified" and that this was said after the weather was stilled. Terrified of Jesus?

## April 1: Mark 5-6 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for April 1, 2017

Mark 5-6

This chapter begins with an account of a man that was tormented by an evil spirit. The community had decided to chain him up, but he was able to break the bindings and was now living in a graveyard. When Jesus approaches him, the spirit begs Jesus not to bother him. Jesus commands him to leave the man and also asks the spirit's name. The spirit calls himself "Legion, for we are many." The spirits ask to be sent into a herd of swine. I find it interesting that a herd of swine could be found in Israel. The swine then run off a cliff into the sea and drown. Naturally, those taking care of the sheep run and tell everyone. When they return, the previously uncontrollable man is clothed, calm and acting normally. They beg Jesus to leave the area. The man wants to go with Jesus, but Jesus tells him to go proclaim what has happened to anyone that will listen.

When they return to the other side of the sea, a great many people gather. Jairus, one of the rulers of the local synagogue, pleads with Jesus to help his daughter who is dying. This would have taken great courage. This man is likely to have been in on various efforts to find a way to silence Jesus. But now, when there is no hope, he turns to Christ for help.

On the way to Jairus' home, a woman is in the crowd that has had a bleeding problem for 12 years. She is convinced that if she can just touch Jesus' clothes she can be healed. She finally gets close enough to touch Him and immediately she is healed. Jesus also knows immediately what has happened. When she realizes that she is found out, she is scared. Jesus does not scold her, but praises her for her faith.

While Jesus is still talking to her, a servant of Jairus arrives to tell him that his daughter is dead. Jesus tells Jairus not to be afraid. When they get to his house, Jesus goes in with only Peter, James and John. He tells the family and friends that are mourning that she is only sleeping. They don't believe Him, so He makes them all leave. Jesus takes the girl's hand and tells her to get up. She immediately comes back to life.

When Jesus leaves he goes back to the area of Nazareth. On the Sabbath Day, He is teaching in the synagogue. Those listening cannot understand how the carpenter's son they knew could have come by the education Jesus seems to possess. Instead of being interested in the information, they reject Him. Jesus comments that a prophet is often rejected by those that know him. It is even true today that people often have to overcome their background with those that knew them when they were younger.

Jesus leaves that area and sends the apostles out in groups of two. They are only allowed to take the clothes on their back. They are told that some will not receive them, but instructed that God will deal with them at the judgement. As they preach repentance, they also cast out demons and heal.

When King Herod hears about the amazing things that Jesus is doing, he is concerned. Even though there is disagreement about whom Jesus is, Herod is convinced that He is John the Baptist back from the dead. Herod knew that he had killed John the Baptist. When Herod had married his brother's wife, Herodias, John had been outspoken against it. Herod had John imprisoned, but Herodias was not satisfied with that. At a feast, Herod's daughter entertained

them and Herod was so pleased he told her he would give her anything up to half his kingdom. As per her mother's suggestion, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. Even though he did not want to do that, he consented and instructed that John would be beheaded. The disciples gave John's body a proper burial.

When the apostles return from their travels, they are excited to share with Jesus all their experiences. Jesus encourages them to go to a deserted place by themselves to rest. Apparently, they had not even taken much time to care for their basic needs, like eating, because they were so busy.

When they leave in a boat, the crowds see them going and rush to meet them when they land. Jesus sees all of the people and has compassion on them. He begins to teach them. As the day is coming to a close, the disciples are concerned about the crowd. There is no food where they are at and it will take some time to get back to the city. Jesus tells them to give them something to eat. The disciples are now concerned because they do not have enough money to buy all the food that would be needed. Jesus asks them what they have on hand. All they have is five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus has the crowd sit in groups. He then blessed the food and begins dividing it up. Before too long, everyone is full and there are twelve baskets of leftovers. With two loaves and five fish, Jesus had fed over 5000 people and ended up with much more than He started.

Now Jesus has the Apostles travel by boat to Bethsaida while He sends the crowds away and spends time alone to pray. About evening, the boat is in the middle of the sea and is in trouble. A storm is making difficult for them to make any headway. About 3am, Jesus comes walking on the water toward them. Thinking it is a ghost, they panic. Jesus assures them that it is Him. The wind immediately stops when He steps into the boat. This amazes them. It is beyond their understanding. Mark records that they also had not understood what happened with the loaves and fishes because their hearts were hardened.

When they land at Gennesaret, they are recognized right away. Everyone begins to bring anyone they know that is sick or handicapped. Everywhere they go, crowds follow just so they can touch his clothes and be healed. Mark points out that everyone that touched His clothes was healed. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that, later on, people are trying to get ahold of Paul's handkerchief thinking they will be healed by touching it.

## **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Jesus: The Great Physician! I marvel over these miracles. Yet nothing compares to His ability to heal us from all sin. Thank you, Doug Twaddell I love these testimonies.

## **April 8: Mark 7-8 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 4-8-17

Mark 7-8

The Pharisees notice that some of Jesus' disciples did not follow the established ritual for washing their hands before they ate. This was not a part of the Law, just a tradition of the Jewish leadership. When they ask Jesus about it, He references Isaiah 29:13. He points out that the people are treating the traditions of men as if they were commands of God. By doing this, they are worshiping in vain. He is not saying that traditions are innately wrong. His concern is that the traditions are considered a higher authority than God's direct commands.

He points to one example. The law said that children should care for their parents. In opposition to that law, it had become a tradition that the children could tell their parents that the money they had to give to them had been promised to the Temple. This tradition allowed a loophole to avoid the commandment. Jesus indicates that they had set up many such traditions.

Apparently referring back to the original accusation of not participating in a traditional hand washing, Jesus tells the crowd it is what comes out of a man that defiles him, not what goes into him. His disciples ask for clarification as they go into a house. Jesus reminds them that when evil comes out of a person, whether in words or actions, it is a reflection of the person's heart. These are the things that defile a person, not the things they eat. This would have been shocking for a Jew to hear because of their high regard for the dietary laws and traditions that had intensified those restrictions.

When Jesus travels to the area of Tyre and Sidon, He would like to be incognito. That becomes impossible. A gentile woman comes to Him asking for help for her daughter who had a demon. Jesus comments on whether He should give to dogs (Gentiles) what was intended for children (Jews). She responds that even dogs are allowed to eat the crumbs that the children drop. This is an interesting viewpoint of some of the Jews tepid reaction (or outright rejection) of Christ. She may not know it, but she is alluding to something that God will say later when He tells the Jews that He will give the kingdom to the Gentiles. Jesus immediately removes the demon from the girl.

Now He travels to the Sea of Galilee where a man is brought to Him who is deaf and has a speech impediment. Jesus puts His fingers in the man's ears and touches His tongue and the man is healed. Jesus tells them not to tell anyone, but how do you hide this? In fact, the more Jesus asks them to keep it quiet, the more it is spread. That is human nature, isn't it? All this time His fame and popularity expands.

Again, the crowds become enormous. Jesus again becomes concerned about their ability to have food. He approaches his disciples to find out how much food they have. They only have seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Just like before, Jesus has the people sit down while he blesses the food. After everyone is full, they collect seven baskets of leftovers. This time He had fed about 4,000 people. Jesus and his disciples leave in a boat to the area of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees start arguing with Him asking for a sign. Jesus becomes frustrated. First, He asks them why they are looking for a sign. What do they think Jesus has been doing all this time? Second, He tells them that they will not be given a sign. Jesus is pointing out that signs have been given and they are ignoring them. If they cannot recognize Him from the signs He is doing, they would not accept any sign.

When they get into the boat again, we are told that no one had brought any bread with them. Jesus uses this as a teachable moment to point out that the leaven (influence) of the Pharisees and Herod can spread and should be guarded against. The disciples start wondering if Jesus is referring to the fact that they did not bring any bread. Jesus becomes frustrated at their lack of understanding. He reminds them of the time He fed 5,000 with only five loaves and when He fed 4,000 with seven loaves. He asks them to remember how much was left over. Jesus wanted them to connect the dots. He wanted them to realize that, under the right conditions, a little can go a long way. If left unchecked, false doctrine and evil can negatively impact many people. With God's help, the smallest amount of good, though it seems insignificant, can have a positive impact on many people.

When Jesus arrives in Bethsaida, a blind man is brought to Him. He leads the man out of town, spits in his eyes and touches him to heal him. Jesus then asks if he can see anything. The man describes men looking like trees and walking around. Jesus puts His hands on the man's eyes again and the man can see perfectly clearly. Again, Jesus instructs the man not to go back to town and not to tell anyone. How can you hide a former blind man that can now see?

Jesus and His disciples now travel to Caesarea Philippi. On the way, He asks what rumors they hear about who He is. They answer John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets or there are other ideas. Jesus asks them who they think He is. Peter says that He is the Christ. Jesus takes this opportunity to teach them about what He will have to suffer and that He will die and rise again three days later. Peter takes exception to this idea and pulls Jesus aside to discuss it. Jesus becomes very stern with Peter. He says, "Get behind me Satan." This is an indication that Peter is not thinking about what God's will is but what his own desires are.

Jesus uses this opportunity to teach about the cost of following Him. If we sincerely follow Him, we will have to deny our own wishes and will. Instead, we will have a burden to carry and sacrifices to make. We have to give these things up willingly. We can gain an eternal spiritual life by giving up our temporary physical life. In the end, what will it matter if we have been successful by worldly standards (money, possessions, power, authority, notoriety, etc.), but, by pursuing these things, we miss out on our eternal reward. If we are ashamed or embarrassed by Christ and the lifestyle He requires, Jesus will be ashamed and embarrassed by us on the day of judgement.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Thanks Doug! Good point about the Gentile woman! See you soon in Abilene!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

Mark 8:21 (NIV) 21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

The Lord has challenged me with that question with embarrassing repetitiveness.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! So many good thoughts regarding these 2 chapters. I am glad you pointed out Isaiah 29. Another good one from this readings is Isaiah 35:5-6, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped."

## **April 15: Mark 9-10 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 4-15-17

Mark 9-10

Jesus begins the 9th chapter by informing them that some of them will see the "kingdom of God" established with power. That phrase can mean different things throughout the scripture. Here it is referring to the church.

6 days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a mountain and His appearance is altered right before their eyes. Also, Elijah and Moses show up. Peter, with his usual "speak before

thinking” energy, suggests setting up monuments to Christ, Elijah and Moses. We are told that he said this because he did not know what else to say. Many times, especially when we speak before thinking, we say things that we later regret. Obviously, God will not allow any monuments. Instead, they hear a voice similar to what they heard at Jesus’ baptism. Jesus tells them not to tell anyone and they do keep this secret.

As they are trying to figure out what seeing Moses and Elijah seemingly raised from the dead meant, they ask about the teaching from the scribes that Elijah would precede the Messiah. This teaching is taken from Malachi 4:5. Jesus does not tell them that John the Baptist was figuratively Elijah. He agrees with the scribes while also referencing the many prophecies about the suffering of the Messiah and the disrespect He will be shown.

When He gets back to the rest of the disciples, there is another great crowd around them. A man tells Jesus that the disciples could not heal his son who had an evil spirit. Jesus shows exasperation with His disciples and has the boy brought to Him. Jesus is able to cast the spirit out. His disciples approach Him privately wanting to know why they could not help the boy. Jesus tells them that it was apparently a difficult spirit and could only be cast out with prayer and fasting.

Jesus now travels through Galilee as He teaches them about His coming death and resurrection. However, they did not understand and were afraid to ask for clarification.

When they get to Capernaum, Jesus tells them that He knows they were discussing something on the way that they did not want Him to hear. It turns out they were trying to decide who would be the greatest. Whatever criteria they were expecting, Jesus tells them something completely different. If they want to be the greatest, they must become the lowliest servant. Jesus then uses a child as an object lesson. They must be willing to serve everyone and not consider anyone to be below their attention.

They are also concerned because they saw someone casting out demons in the name of Christ. Because they did not know him, they told him to stop. Jesus again surprises them by telling them to leave the man alone. If he is doing good deeds in the name of Christ, he can’t turn around and say disparaging things about Jesus.

Jesus also tells them that anyone that causes one of His sheep to stumble, they will be severely punished. Sin is such a detriment to our service to God that He tells us to do everything we can to eliminate whatever causes us to give in. His is not advocating literally mutilating our bodies. He is telling us to take our sin and its causes seriously.

Jesus now travels to Judea. The Pharisees have a question for Him about the legality of divorce. Jesus wants them to look at what Moses said. When they point out that Moses allowed it, Jesus tells them that it was because of their stubbornness and hard hearts. However, God never intended for divorce to be a part of our lives. A man and woman should become one, apart from their parents, and never be separated from each other. He then gives some difficult teaching. When divorce and remarriage take place, there is sin that occurs. He does not indicate that it is unforgiveable or is an automatic condemnation to hell, but there is sin involved nonetheless.

Again, some children want to get close to Jesus and the disciples do not think it is a good idea. Jesus once more uses them as an object lesson. They seem to have a very difficult time understanding that the humility and innocence of a child is to be emulated not despised.

A man comes to Jesus wanting to know how to gain eternal life. After a discussion about the basics of the law, Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. This is

not a requirement of all followers of Christ, but this man seems to have many possessions and was not able to part with them. These things were causing him to trust in his stuff and not trust in God. Jesus describes this as taking up his cross. All followers have sacrifices they must make and burdens they must bear. Not all of us have exactly the same issues to deal with, but everyone will have something. It is important for us to be honest with ourselves and be willing to give up the things that hinder us from fully trusting God.

Peter, after hearing this exchange, points out that they have given up everything to follow Christ. Jesus tells them that anyone, not just them, who is willing to sacrifice to follow Christ, will gain much more than that as a reward in heaven.

While they are traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus again reminds them that when they get there He will be betrayed, condemned to death, beaten, mocked, killed by the Gentiles and come back to life after three days.

James and John come to Him with a request. They want to be honored in the kingdom (they are thinking about a physical kingdom) by sitting on Jesus right and left hands. Jesus asks them if they are able to be overwhelmed (baptized) the same way He will be. They say they can bear it, but don't understand what is about to happen. Jesus tells them they will indeed have to go through similar trials and suffering, but God will reward those who are deserving. This causes some hard feelings among the other ten. Jesus has to once again teach them about humility and servitude. He points out that leaders in the world wield their authority over those under them. Jesus does not want them to lead this way. He wants them, and us, to lead by serving. He uses Himself as an example. God is going to grant Him great authority because of His willing sacrifice for others, even those who do not appreciate it.

As they approach Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus is begging by the side of the road. As He cries out to Jesus, others are telling him to be quiet. He just becomes more urgent in his pleas. Jesus brings him near and heals him. Bartimaeus begins to follow Christ.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
It was such an honor & privilege to hear two great lessons from you today, Doug! Thank you!!!  
<3

## **April 22: Mark 11-12 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for April 22, 2017

Mark 11-12

Jesus enters Jerusalem riding a donkey as the people praise Him. This is a fulfillment of prophecy. However, it is late in the day and He does not want to stay in Jerusalem, so they go to Bethany.

On the way back the next day, Jesus is hungry and sees a fig tree. Unfortunately, there are no figs because they were out of season. Jesus pronounces that no one will ever eat figs from that tree again.

When they get to Jerusalem, they go to the Temple and Jesus is aghast at the scene. People are exchanging money and selling doves. They had to turn their Roman currency into a form that was acceptable for the Temple. Under the Law, the poor could substitute doves for the sacrifice. What was not allowed was making money off the exchange or overcharging for the doves. These things were not to take place on the Temple grounds, either. Jesus is only upset because of where they are doing their business and that they are cheating the disadvantaged. His statements in 11:17 are two quotes from the prophets. The first is from Isaiah 56:7 where God is talking about Gentiles who will serve the Lord. The second is from Jeremiah 7:11 where God is talking about the idolatry of Judah. God indicates that He has seen His house become a "den of thieves." This could refer to the people of Jeremiah's day robbing God of the honor and worship that is only due Him. However, I believe it is also a reference to God seeing back then what is going on in front of Jesus now. When Jesus drives the merchants out, the Jewish leaders are more convicted in their desire to kill Him. They now travel back to Bethany for the night.

On the way back to Jerusalem the next day, they see the fig tree dead clear down to the roots. Jesus uses it as an object lesson about the power of faith. God is able to do much more than we could ever ask or imagine. Jesus instructs them to pray without doubting. He also tells them that harboring ill toward someone can interfere with our prayers. We should forgive others so our prayers can be heard and so God will forgive us.

In Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders challenge Him as to the authority He has to do all the things He has done. They are most certainly thinking about the merchants He dislodged because they would have been getting a portion of the profits. Instead of answering, Jesus asks them a question that if they will answer, so will He. He wants them to divulge the source of the Baptism of John. They reason that if they say it was from heaven, Jesus will want to know why they did not believe. If they say it was from men, the people will be angered because John was widely accepted as a prophet. They chicken out and say they don't know. Jesus tells them that He will not answer their question, either.

Now Jesus tells another parable. This one is about a vineyard owner who leases his property to caretakers and goes to another country. When it is time for harvest, he sends a servant to bring him some grapes. The caretakers beat him up and send him away empty handed. The owner sends a succession of servants and they are all either beaten or killed. Having only one son, the owner decides that maybe they will respect him. The son is sent, but they kill him so they can take the vineyard for themselves. Jesus points out that the owner will destroy the caretakers and let others take over. He then quotes from Psalm 118:22-23. The Jewish leaders know that God is the owner, the vineyard is the kingdom of God, they are the caretakers and Jesus is referring to Himself as the Son. Instead of learning from the parable, they become even more determined to rid the world of this Jesus but are afraid right now because of what the people think about Him.

Some of the leaders come to Him to see what He will say about paying taxes to Caesar. If they can get Him to defy the authority of Rome, it will be easier to have Him killed. Jesus gives an answer they are not expecting. He tells them that since the money has Caesar's image, it is appropriate to give it to him. He also reminds them not to neglect giving to God what belongs to Him.

The Sadducees now approach with a question. Their question is about a man that marries but dies before he has any children. In accordance with the Law of Moses, the man's brother

marries the wife. Unfortunately, he also dies before any children are born. This process continues until she has been married to all seven brothers and then she dies. They want Jesus to tell them who she will be married to at the resurrection. This is interesting because the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. Jesus' answer stuns them all. He points out that they do not understand the scriptures or the power of God. He quotes from God's conversation with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). God refers to Himself in the present tense (I AM) and twice says He "is" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (again indicating the present tense). If God recognizes them in the present even though they had been dead for many, many years, then God is the God of the living (resurrection) and not the dead. They have no response for this reasoning.

A scribe now wants Jesus to tell them what the greatest commandment is. With all the commandments that were given through Moses, Jesus had many to choose from. I can just see those around Him trying to guess which one He would pick. Jesus tells them that the most important thing is to love God with every part of your being and life. He also reveals the command that is second greatest; to love your neighbor as yourself. When the scribe agrees with Jesus and even explains why Jesus is correct, Jesus tells him that he is close to understanding the kingdom of God. We, too, should strive to make these the most important things in our life. If we love God with everything, we will only want to do what He asks from us. If we love our neighbors as much as we do ourselves, our behavior toward others will be honorable and upright.

Since no one else is willing to ask another question, Jesus decides to ask one of His own. He wants to know how the Christ can be the son of David when David referred to the Christ as his Lord? The common people seem to understand and accept this, but not the leadership. Jesus then warns them to watch out for the scribes. Even though they look and sound religious, it is all for show and they do not act the way God wants them to.

While Jesus is sitting near the place where people are giving their money offering to the Temple, He sees many rich give a lot of money. However, there was a poor widow who only gave a small sum. Jesus points out to His disciples that she gave more than all the others. He was not judging as men would judge based on the mathematical total. He was judging based on their willingness to sacrifice and the purpose in their hearts. How does God see us when He judges by those standards?

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
About the fig tree . . . Something gets lost in the translation here . . . The point is "By their fruits you shall know them!" People familiar with how figs grow, will know that the first season of fruit appears on the branches BEFORE the leaves emerge! Then there can be two or three subsequent rounds of figs after the tree is in full leaf. SO, if one sees a tree in full leaf, one should expect to find figs! Jesus was not expecting anything besides what the tree was expected to perform, that is, he was not Looking for figs at the wrong time of year. The fig tree was like some people, putting on a show of something but not producing what the master wanted. A person looking at the tree, would think it was a beautiful, productive, tree; close inspection however, proved it to be otherwise! That was the lesson! You may be able to fool some, or even most people, but you cannot fool the LORD and, in the end, you will be condemned and you will perish in your vanity!

## Replies:

Doug Twaddell:

So the comment about not being the time for figs doesn't mean they were out of season? That is how I always read it.

Steven Wright:

Right. Thought transfers badly in translation. Ends up saying something very different.

Steven Wright:

Compare the rendering of the same incident in (Matthew 21:18 - 22)

Charles Fry:

Our climate is pretty similar to that of Israel. This is what our fig tree looks like right now, with leaves and green figs. The leaves will be thicker in a few weeks. Passover this year was a week and a half ago, a little earlier than some years.



Doug Twaddell:

Thank you for the information. Very helpful.

## Comment:

Steven Wright:

And of course, Jesus also used the incident to teach his disciples about the power of faith.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Faith... And judgment... Mark lays out events so that we have the triumphant entrance, an obvious fulfillment of prophecy of the coming King, concluding with the big nothing as Jesus arrived at the temple, looked around, and left for Bethany. Rather than being crowned, the anointed one was ignored by the priests and rulers. When he came into the temple the next morning, considering Mark said he looked around the evening before, it seems evident he came to do what he did, moving with deliberate purpose among the despoilers of the sanctuary and the sheep of his pasture, and teaching as he went. The cursing of the fig tree is not incidental. Up until then, the disciples had seen Jesus exercising patient control, always doing miracles that brought healing or peace. He fed people and calmed storms. Always benevolent in what he did, even under great pressure. He spoke of judgment, but showed persistent restraint, the path of peace. But our redeemer is also the divinely appointed judge of all, and he showed a glimpse of that aspect of his authority, just a glimpse, when he overturned tables and condemned a leafy but fruitless tree.

## Replies:

Ginger Hermon:

I agree. The fact that the cleansing of the temple is sandwiched between the two parts of the account of the fig tree in Mark 11 may underscore the theme of judgement. The withering could be prophetic of the Jewish authorities who were about to reject their Messiah.

## Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

This morning, when Kathleen and I were on our way to deliver Katelyn back to her mother, Kathleen mentioned that she wondered why Jesus cursed the fig tree. Being a good husband, I wondered with her. Perhaps the reason is:

A – The fig tree had no fruit on it. But it was not the season for figs so the tree was behaving in a way consistent with its nature; the way God designed it to be. So no fault can be found in the tree itself. I doubt the tree itself was being punished.

B – The tree was cursed as punishment for its owners so that THEY would no longer profit from it. This is in keeping with Genesis 3:17 -

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

The ground was cursed because of Adam’s sin. The concept of “curse” seems to imply an inability to fulfill the natural purpose for which something was created. A cursed fig tree cannot bear figs. The ground that is cursed cannot grow things as well as occurred in the Garden of Eden. A womb that is cursed will remain barren. Cursed things cannot perform their natural functions.

But no mention is made of the owners.

Furthermore, if the fig tree was somebody’s property, then if Jesus had harvested from it, that would have been in violation of the Mosaic commandment not to steal. “It’s only a fig” would not be a valid excuse. So if the tree was in somebody’s front yard, Jesus would have knocked on the door and asked for permission.

Of course, destroying the tree would have been the destruction of somebody’s property – something that would require restitution. But no mention was made of this. So I don’t think that the tree belonged to anyone.

C – Jesus was wanting to show His power. But Jesus did not use his power and perform miracles merely to show off. Everything He did was out of compassion – His miracles helped people. But no people were helped by this curse.

So why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

I see the remarks, Charles, that you made on this. Was He not showing this same authority by exorcising demons and curing the sick? That action helped people; I’m still mystified by this fig tree.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Yes, Kevin, the same power and authority, but this event, along with driving out the money changers and sellers, does have a different "feel" to it than the other miracles and actions of Jesus, I think. A couple of minor points that you raise, first.

At Passover, which is our time frame in this story, even if the figs were not yet ripe, there should have been figs, especially on a leafed out tree. But there were none.

Eating a handful of grain, or of fruit, was not viewed as stealing, but rather gleaning. The Law had some specific permissions about gleaning (Lev 19:9-10 for example). I don't think anyone of his people would fault Jesus for picking a few figs to eat (unless it was on a Sabbath...)

On the one hand, Jesus had the power, authority, and right to do whatever he wanted with any tree, whether cultivated or wild, but most likely this was a wild fig tree growing along the path between Bethany and Jerusalem. The biggest fig tree I've ever seen was in Jerusalem, growing in a little area of ground south of the temple mount, and I'm pretty sure it was uncultivated, being in an urban area and 30 or 40 ft tall. It was huge, compared to any fig tree I've ever seen here. Most likely, it was a wild fig tree that Jesus cursed, and an unfruitful one at that.

Back to the purpose, God presents himself to us in the Bible as Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. Jesus repeatedly warned of judgment and the fire of hell, but whenever his disciples showed any inclination to shut people out, whether children, or gentile women, or some guy casting out demons in Jesus name, or to call down fire from heaven on uncooperative Samaritans, Jesus always rebuked them. He preached judgment, but practiced enormous patience. The signs and wonders were always acts of mercy, and he didn't even "judge" demons "before the time" (Mark 5:1-13 w/Matthew 8:29). But he is judge, by divine appointment (John 5:22-30). People today have some inclination to bypass the reality that Jesus has power both to save and to destroy. On this one occasion, Jesus showed his disciples that he has that power of both life and death. He could have incinerated those crooks in the temple, instead of dumping their tables and chasing them out, but he didn't. The fig tree utterly affirmed that he could have. and that he does have authority to judge, with the power to back it up. He told a parable a couple of days later, describing himself in judgment this way: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'" (Matthew 25:41-43). The cursed fig tree was an object lesson for his disciples, affirming the teaching about the cursed who do not feed him when he is hungry.

## Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thanks!

## April 29: Mark 13-14 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 4-29-17

Mark 13-14

As they are leaving the Temple grounds, His disciples point out the impressiveness of the structures. Jesus predicts its destruction. Peter, Andrew, James and John want to know when it will happen and how will they know it is coming. First, Jesus points to three things that will not be signs: different people will claim to be the returned Messiah; nations will continue to fight wars; and natural disasters will occur. What He does say to watch for is persecution from multiple sources. However, He wants them to continue to preach the word to everyone. Eventually, there will be an abomination so severe that it will be unmistakable. When that happens, the believers are to get as far away from Jerusalem as possible. He tells them not even go back for possessions. He also tells them that it could be worse, but God will show mercy to those that believe and shorten this time period. Again, He emphasizes for them not to be deceived by false prophets and those claiming to be the Messiah.

Now He begins to tell them what will happen at some point after that tribulation. The natural order of the physical will be altered. The Son of Man will return as His angels gather those that serve Christ. He uses a fig tree as an example. You can tell when summer is near by the new growth on the tree. In the same way, they will know when the destruction of the Temple is near. However, they cannot know when the second coming will be. We are to be diligently watchful for our Masters return

The chief priests and scribes are trying to figure out how to take Jesus into custody. Because it is the Passover, they decide to wait until it is over to avoid an angry mob.

While at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman (who John identifies as Mary the brother of Lazarus) breaks open an alabaster flask of expensive oil and pours it on Jesus head. Someone (who John identifies as Judas Iscariot) criticizes her by arguing that it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Most likely his frustration is that he could have stolen some of it as he often did. Jesus tells them to leave her alone because they can help the poor anytime, but she has anointed Him for burial.

Judas now begins to make arrangements with the council to betray Jesus for a sum of money.

Jesus sends two of His disciples to prepare a place for them to celebrate the Passover together. When they gather for the feast, Jesus announces that one of them will betray Him. Naturally, they want to know who it is. To find out, they each ask about their own guilt so that when Jesus says "no" they are vindicated. Jesus finally tells them that it is the one who will dip bread in oil at the same time He does.

This is when Jesus establishes the method for honoring and remembering His death and its significance. The only bread that would have been allowed in the house was unleavened and they would have been drinking wine from grapes.

Jesus also takes this opportunity to predict that they will all stumble and scatter that night. However, after He is raised, He will meet them in Galilee. Peter protests the idea that he will stumble. Jesus tells him, specifically, that he will deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows twice. Peter is even more forceful in his protest claiming that he would rather die first.

They leave the city and go to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus instructs them to wait for Him while He goes off to pray, but He takes Peter, James and John with Him. He confesses to them that He is hurting in His very soul about what is going to happen. He goes a little farther away and asks the Father if there is another way to accomplish the goal of salvation. He is willing to go through with the Fathers will and the overwhelming events that are about to occur if there is no other way. When He returns to find them sleeping, he warns them to watch and pray so that temptation will not overtake them. When He tells them that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, I cannot help but think that, even though it is for all of them, perhaps it is a specific point

to make to Peter. After He finds them asleep a third time, he wakes them up and points out the arrival of Judas.

The mob arrives with Judas in the lead. When they get to Jesus, Judas greets Him as Rabbi and kisses Him. This was the confirmation to the leaders that this was Jesus. Peter (identified by John) takes a sword and cuts off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Other accounts point to the healing of this man, but Mark does not. When Jesus addresses the mob by telling them that they are fulfilling scripture, all His disciples run away.

Mark includes a curious event with a young man who is naked except for a linen cloth. When some in the mob try to grab him, he leaves the cloth behind and runs away.

Jesus is taken to the Sanhedrin. It is noted that Peter follows as far as the courtyard where he warms himself by a fire. When they cannot find anything worthy of death, false witnesses begin to come forward. The problem is that they don't have their stories straight. When the High Priest becomes frustrated at both the insufficient charges and the silence of Jesus, He asks Jesus directly if He is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus now has something to say. When He says that the claim is true and that He will be sitting at the right hand of God, the High Priest tears his clothes and condemns Jesus for blasphemy. This leads the council to condemn Him to death and they begin the process of humiliating Him by spitting on Him and beating Him.

Meanwhile, Peter in the courtyard is approached by a servant girl who accuses him of being with Jesus. Peter denies it and hears a rooster crow. When she accuses him a second time, he denies it again. When others begin to level the same accusation based on his speech and genealogy, Peter denies it again with cursing and swearing. When he then hears the rooster crow a second time, he realizes he is guilty of the very thing that Jesus predicted.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

My heart is pierced over & over again when I read these denials from Peter. Praise God, like Peter, I'm restored over & over again, thanks to His death & resurrection. ❤️ thank you for sharing details of Christ's prophecy, testimonies from these chapters and institution of the Lord's Supper. Very good lessons no matter how many times we read them!

## **May 6: Mark 15-16 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 5-6-17

Mark 15-16

Having secured (in their mind) a confession of blasphemy from Jesus, the Sanhedrin now has a difficult task. Under the old Law, they only needed to secure witnesses and to carry out the stoning. One of the ways the Roman government maintained control over subdued people was to have complete control over capital punishment. The Jewish leadership needed to convince the Romans that Jesus had committed a crime the Romans would consider worthy of death. To do this, they take Him to Pilate.

Since the Romans won't punish Jesus for blaspheming God, the Jews twist His claim to be the King of the Jews (spiritually) to try and convince Pilate that He is a threat to the authority of the Roman Caesar. Pilate is confounded when Jesus refuses to defend Himself or contradict his accusers.

Pilate had started a tradition at Passover to show the Jews that he could be merciful. During the feast, he would release a prisoner and pardon them. He offers to release Jesus in honor of the feast, but the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas (a man found guilty of murder and rebellion) and crucify Jesus. Pilate continues to attempt to free Jesus, but, in the end, he consents to the wishes of the crowd. He lets Barabbas go and has Jesus flogged and delivered to be crucified.

The soldiers take over and have their way with Jesus. They dress Him in purple (color of royalty), put a crown of thorns on His head, mock Him as King and spit on Him. As He is led to the site of the crucifixion, He reaches a point where He can no longer carry the crossbeam. They pull Simon, a Cyrenian, from the crowd and force him to carry it the rest of the way.

As they are preparing to nail Him to the cross, they offer Him a mixture of wine and myrrh to drink. This was intended to be a mild sedative that would make it easier to control the victim while they drove the nails. Jesus refuses it. He willingly submits to the horrific treatment and does not struggle to get away. I cannot help but wonder what the soldiers must have thought when they saw Jesus' humility.

After they crucified Him, they cast lots for His clothes and nailed the accusation above His head for everyone to read, "The King of the Jews." Two thieves were crucified with Him (fulfilling a prophesy from Isaiah 53:12). Many in the crowd and the Jewish leaders continue to make fun of Him. After about six hours of hanging on the cross, Jesus accepted a drink of sour wine and died. At that moment, the veil of the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom signifying the end of the Law of Moses and Temple worship. I have often wondered what the priests in the Temple thought when they were suddenly able to see into the Holy of Holies. A centurion, who would have been a Roman soldier, was even able to recognize and confess that Jesus must have been the Son of God. We also find out that there were many of His followers, especially women, who were watching as He died.

Joseph of Arimathea, who was on the council, went before Pilate and formally asked for the Body of Jesus. There is no doubt that the Jewish leadership was monitoring what happened to Jesus. This would have outed Joseph as a follower of Christ. Pilate allowed it and Joseph prepared the body, with help, and laid Jesus in a tomb of rock and rolled a stone in front of the entrance.

After the Sabbath was over ("very early on the first day of the week"), Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome brought spices to honor the body. When they arrive, the first thing they notice is that the stone has been moved. When they go into the tomb, they see a young man (an angel) sitting there. He tells them not to be frightened and that Jesus had risen from the dead. He wants them to go and tell the disciples to head for Galilee and Jesus will meet them there. However, they do not tell anyone.

After His resurrection, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. When she tells others about seeing Him, they don't believe her. Jesus also appears to two men (Luke records they were walking to Emmaus) and they begin telling everyone, but they do not believe them, either. Eventually, Jesus appears to the eleven apostles and is not pleased with their unbelief. He tells them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Those that believe are to be baptized. He also tells them that they will be able to work miraculous signs and wonders. Mark's account ends with Jesus being taken up to heaven and the Apostles going out to preach and work miracles to confirm the truth of their message.

### **Comment:**

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Doug! You ask what the soldiers were thinking. Soldiers then, as today, are trained to de-humanize their opponents so making it possible to kill. Soldiers are asked to subjugate their own humanity; that innate knowledge of God's proscription of murder. Can you imagine killing another human being? Probably not. Now think of that other human being as a "gook" or "hun" or whatever derogatory term you want, and that those people are bent on destroying your family. Killing them becomes possible and easier. Perhaps in Jesus' time, Romans used "Jew" as a derogatory term; I doubt they had the sensibilities towards human life that we have today. They were trained to obey orders, not necessarily to think about them. Our troops today learn quickly in a war zone to regard everything as a deadly threat. When they return home, they are overwhelmed by the pace of life here - hyperalert to all movements as being possible threats. This is part of PTSD.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Gaylene Green:

Another thing I hadn't thot of.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

It was a great blessing to be with you and other beloved brethren this weekend, Doug! Thank you for another gospel book summary. Hundreds of years of prophecy fulfilled in a short 30+ year life span, and many fulfilled in 1 day. 2,000+ years later His Kingdom still communes each Lord's Day; therefore proclaiming His death and Resurrection! Praise God for His plan of salvation. Looking forward to meeting in the sky! ❤️