

Reading the Gospel of Mark

Dwayne Phillips

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Capitalization

Section titles were capitalized according to the APA style given in <https://capitalizemytitle.com/>.

Purpose

This study leads the reader through the Gospel of Mark. This is the shortest of the four Gospels in the New Testament and provides an excellent starting point to understanding the life of Jesus Christ and those disciples who founded the church.

Some Study Aids

Through this study will be sections called “Recap.” These will help remind the reader of lists of persons, places, and events.

Translations

Various English translation use various words. This study will quote from:

CSB: The Christian Standard Bible, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers.
<https://csbible.com/>

NET: The New English Translation, Copyright © 1996 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C.,
<https://netbible.org/>

The Beginning

Chapter 1

This is the good news story about Jesus Christ, called here “the Son of God.” (CSB)

The good news begins with a quote from the prophet Isaiah about a messenger who will proceed Jesus. This messenger is John.

John, who wore camel hair and leather, proclaimed “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (CSB) He tells of one who is coming after himself. That coming one will baptize with the Spirit.

Jesus is Immersed in Water and Temptation

Jesus comes from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptizes Jesus. People saw the spirit of God descending on Jesus. The descent reminded them of a dove coming down and lighting gently. They heard a voice from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” (CSB)

The Spirit of God drives Jesus into the wilderness where He lived with wild animals and had angels as servants. He was there forty days while Satan tempted Him.

The Ministry Begins

Jesus returns to Galilee and proclaims the good news of God:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” — CSB

Jesus selects his first four apostles among a fishing community. They comprise two sets of fishing brothers: Simon and Andrew were one set while James and John were the second pair. Jesus charges them in familiar language as Jesus will have them “fish for people.” (CSB)

Recap

From time to time, this study will recap events and persons.

Recap: Followers

Jesus has selected four followers to note by name. These are two sets of brothers. These are:

1. Simon
2. Andrew
3. James
4. John

Teaching with Authoritative Action in Capernaum

Jesus went to Capernaum and taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The listeners were astonished and described Jesus as a person of authority. Jesus demonstrated His spiritual

authority in an encounter with an unclean spirit. This spirit recognized the spiritual aspect of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus hushed that talk and drove the unclean spirit from the person in whom the spirit lived. As could be predicted, news of Jesus spread through the region.

Jesus and the four apostles go to the family home of Simon and Andrew where they found Simon's mother-in-law ill with a fever. Jesus touched her and removed the fever.

Jesus repeated these miracles in the city — healing and expelling demons. As before, all the spiritual demons recognized the spiritual part of Jesus. In turn, Jesus forbade them to speak of such.

More Ministry Throughout Galilee

Jesus and the four apostles move from village to village in Galilee. Jesus continued to teach and demonstrate spiritual authority by driving out demons.

Jesus healed a man with leprosy. Per the requirements of the law, Jesus told the man to show himself to the priest and offer the proper sacrifices. Instead, the man spread the news about Jesus. Because of his newfound fame, Jesus stopped going into towns. Jesus stayed out in the deserted places where people from everywhere came to see Him.

Teaching, Healing, and Forgiving in Capernaum

Chapter 2

After a few days, Jesus returned to the city of Capernaum where He taught in a home. The crowd was thick. A paralytic man was carried by four friends. They could not move through the crowd, so they carried the paralytic up to the roof, removed the roof, and lowered the man down into where Jesus was teaching.

“Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’” — CSB

Some scribes were present and thought how this “forgiveness” statement was blasphemy. Jesus perceived what they were thinking. Jesus asked if were easier to forgive sins or to heal a paralytic. Given both were impossible, Jesus showed His power by healing the paralytic. Everyone could see that with their eyes. Everyone there was astounded.

In the remainder of chapter 2, Jesus challenges some beliefs that were deeply held by Jews. These included (1) associating with sinners, (2) fasting, and (3) the Sabbath day.

Jesus meets a tax collector named Levi (some researchers believe this Levi was also known as Matthew while some dispute this idea). In response to the words “Follow me” (CSB), Levi stands, leaves his job, and follows Jesus. Levi has Jesus come to Levi’s house for a meal. It was natural that many of Levi’s friends and colleagues were there. It is also natural that many of these persons were also tax collectors—a reviled way to make a living in that time and place.

Some Pharisees were upset that Jesus was eating with despised sinners. Jesus replies that doctors visit sick people, not healthy people.

Next comes the controversy of fasting. The followers of John the Baptist and the followers of the Pharisees fasted regularly. The followers of Jesus, however, did not. Jesus claimed to be different. Jesus used the examples of wineskins, patches, and wines. Mixing new with old didn't work as the new was flexible while the old was brittle. Jesus was new and different. The followers of Jesus would mourn and fast when Jesus left them. While with them, however, they would feast.

Finally comes the Sabbath. The followers of Jesus picked and ate grain on the Sabbath. That was work! Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the Sabbath is for rest. God gave the people rest; rest did not give the people God, i.e., resting did not make a person righteous. Jesus is preeminent of the day of rest as Jesus gives mankind rest from sin.

Chapter 3

The lesson on the Sabbath continues across the boundary of chapters into Chapter 3. The Pharisees created a trap for Jesus on the Sabbath in the synagogue. They placed a man with a shriveled hand in front of Jesus. Jesus asked a simple question, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" (CSB) Of course, the Pharisees could not answer.

Jesus asked the man to hold his hand out. The hand was healed. Did Jesus heal the hand? Did the faith of the man heal the hand? Regardless, medical work had been performed on the Sabbath. Still, the Pharisees could not make a public scene because of this. They privately plotted with the Herodians to find a way to kill Jesus.

The Multitudes

Jesus moved away from towns and out into the open country near the sea. The people followed Jesus regardless of the location. This is because Jesus was healing people and removing demons from people. Jesus had his close followers prepare a small boat for him so that the crowds wouldn't push Him into the sea.

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon's mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
2. Healing the leper (Chapter 1)
3. Healing the paralytic (Chapter 2)
4. Healing the man with the shriveled hand (Chapter 3)
5. Removing demons from people (Chapter 3)

Recap: Tests and Trick Questions

1. Why don't the disciples of Jesus fast?

The Twelve Apostles

Jesus named twelve persons to be “apostles.” These twelve were “to be with him, to send them out to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons.” (CSB) For the record, they were:

“Simon, he gave the name Peter; and to James the son of Zebedee, and to his brother John, he gave the name “Boanerges” (that is, “Sons of Thunder”); Andrew; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.” — CSB

Recap: Followers

Jesus now has twelve men whom He calls apostles. These are:

1. Peter
2. James
3. John
4. Andrew
5. Phillips
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. Thomas
9. James
10. Thaddaeus
11. Simon
12. Judas Iscariot

Possessed by Beelzebub

Jesus continued to relieve people by sending demons out of them. The Pharisees, not able to understand how this was happening, accused Jesus of being from Beelzebub and having an unclean spirit. Jesus responds with the famous quote, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.” (CSB) which is more famously quoted in the King James translation as “if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”

Family in Jesus Christ

The earthly family of Jesus is mentioned several times here. First, Jesus was so busy that He was not eating. They were concerned for his mental health as He was forgetting to eat. They are mentioned again at the end of Chapter 3 as they called for Jesus so they could see Him. When given this message, Jesus replied, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” (CSB)

Parables

Chapter 4

Jesus began to teach via parables. Jesus mentioned how the prophet Isaiah had written,

“...they may indeed look
and yet not perceive;
they may indeed listen
and yet not understand;
otherwise, they might turn back
and be forgiven.” — CSB

Jesus constantly spoke to the crowds in parables, “Privately, however, he explained everything to his own disciples.” (CSB)

Jesus told and explained the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Growing Seed, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. They all concerned how the Kingdom of God grew as the good news spread.

Recap: Parables

1. A House Divided (Chapter 3)
2. Sower (Chapter 4)
3. Growing Seed (Chapter 4)
4. Mustard Seed (Chapter 4)

Power Over the Sea

They all rode in a boat to cross a small sea. As Jesus was asleep, the wind rose into a storm swamping the boat. In a panic, they woke Jesus. Jesus spoke a few words and the sea calmed. This terrified the men—many of whom were experienced seamen.

Chapter 5

The Legion of Demons

As they reached the shore in the region of the Gerasenes, “... a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met him.” (CSB) In this remarkable miracle, Jesus sent the Legion of demons in the man into a herd of pigs that then drowned themselves in the sea.

Alarmed by this loss of livestock, the people of the nearby town came out to see the previously feral man sitting calmly in his right mind. As Jesus was leaving, the man begged to come along, but Jesus instead told him, “Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.” (CSB)

Raising a Girl from the Dead

A leader of the synagogue named Jairus came to Jesus begging for help. His daughter was deathly ill. While in transit, persons from Jairus’ house came and told him, “Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?” (CSB) Jesus continued to the home encouraging Jairus to believe and not fear human outcomes.

Jesus only allowed Peter, James, and John to follow. When reaching the house people tried to convince Jesus that it was too late—the child was dead. Jesus took the hand of the little girl and said, “Little girl, I say to you, get up.” (CSB) The girl stood and walked.

Healing a Woman Suffering from Bleeding

While walking to the home of Jairus, Jesus heals a woman suffering from bleeding. The nameless woman believed that Jesus could heal her condition if she only touched the clothing of Jesus. She was able to touch the clothing and she was immediately healed.

Jesus noticed a person’s faith and realized, “that power had gone out from him.” (CSB)

Jesus wanted to know who had touched him. The followers scoffed and told Jesus that hundreds of persons had touched Him. Still, Jesus sought the woman who had the faith needed for healing. “Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction.” (CSB)

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon’s mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
2. Healing the leper (Chapter 1)
3. Healing the paralytic (Chapter 2)
4. Healing the man with the shriveled hand (Chapter 3)
5. Removing demons from people (Chapter 3)
6. Quieting the sea (Chapter 4)
7. Casting out the legion of demons (Chapter 5)
8. Raising a girl from the dead (Chapter 5)
9. Healing the woman suffering from bleeding (Chapter 5)

No Honor in His Hometown

Chapter 6

Jesus travels to Nazareth—the place where he lived from childhood into adulthood. Jesus speaks in the Synagogue or the religious school for Jews. At first, people are amazed at what Jesus says. Almost immediately, however, they change their opinion.

“Who is this guy? We know him. We know his family? This is some kinds of act.” Jesus’ replied (using the old King James Version),

“A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country...” (King James Version)

Sending Out the Twelve

Jesus sent his twelve disciples to travel and minister on their own. Jesus sent them with few materials as resources. They were to stay in one place in each town and disregard the places that disregarded them.

The journeys of the twelve were quite successful being described as, “They drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” (CSB)

The Death of John the Baptist and Ties to Jesus

Almost as a parenthesis in the text about Jesus and the followers is a description of the death of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus.

King Herod had married a woman named Herodias. At the time, Herodias was still married to Philip, the brother of King Herod. The king marries the wife of his brother while his brother is still alive.

John the Baptist told King Herod that all this in-the-family marrying of married people was wrong. Herodias didn’t like the idea of an itinerant priest wandering in the wilderness telling a King what to do. To appease his wife, King Herod put John the Baptist in prison.

At a party, the daughter of Herodias danced for the crowd. They were quite pleased, and King Herod asked what she wanted as a reward. After consulting with her mother, the dancing daughter said, I want the head of John the Baptist.

King Herod didn’t want to look bad in front of the party attenders, so the King had John beheaded.

This all ties into Jesus because Jesus was famous for miracles. John had been famous for miracles. Had John risen from the dead? That wasn’t possible as John’s head went to one place and his body to another. Still, what was happening?

Feeding the Five Thousand

Let’s return to before the description of John the Baptist’s death. The twelve disciples return from their first missionary trip. Jesus takes them to a remote place to rest. The crowds of people, however, understood what was happening and found Jesus and the followers in a remote place.

Thousands of people are with Jesus in a remote place; this is not a city with food. What are they to do? Simple, Jesus should send the crowds away.

Instead, Jesus tells the followers, “You give them something to eat.” (CSB)

The followers estimated that it would take six months’ pay to buy one meal for the crowd. All they had were five biscuits and two little fish.

Jesus had the crowd sit, told the followers to distribute the food, and they collected twelve baskets of leftovers afterwards (each of the twelve followers filled their basket).

Walking on Water

Jesus splits His forces. Jesus sends the twelve ahead to travel to the other side of the sea in a boat. Jesus stays behind to be with the crowds a little longer before going into the hills to pray.

In the middle of the night, the wind was blowing into the face of those in the boat. They could not row as fast as the wind was blowing, i.e., they were drifting backwards. Jesus walked across the sea and was about to pass the boat. Note: not only was Jesus defying gravity, but Jesus was also defying wind resistance. The men in the boat were terrified. Jesus said, “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (CSB) Jesus stepped into the boat; the wind stopped blowing.

More Healing

Once ashore, the crowds returned. People were healed merely by touching the clothes Jesus was wearing.

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon’s mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
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4. Healing the man with the shriveled hand (Chapter 3)
5. Removing demons from people (Chapter 3)
6. Quieting the sea (Chapter 4)
7. Casting out the legion of demons (Chapter 5)
8. Raising a girl from the dead (Chapter 5)
9. Healing the woman suffering from bleeding (Chapter 5)
10. Feeding the five thousand (Chapter 6)
11. Walking on water (Chapter 6)
12. Healing by touching the clothes of Jesus (Chapter 6)

Traditions of Religious Elders

Chapter 7

Some Pharisees (the elder statesmen of the Jewish religion) went down from Jerusalem to watch Jesus personally. They noticed that the followers of Jesus did not follow the ceremonial

washing of persons and utensils before eating. This was easily explained by wealth and circumstance: the followers were poor, happy to have anything to eat, and were basically eating while walking or sitting on the side of the trail.

Still, this was a failure to follow established religious practice. It was scandalous.

Jesus countered the elder statesmen of religion by quoting one of the greatest historical elder statesmen of religion, the prophet Isaiah.

“Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

This people honors me with their lips

but their heart is far from me.

They worship me in vain

teaching as doctrines human commands.” — CSB

Jesus then gave a practical argument to dispel the complaint of the Pharisees. Jesus explained that swallowing a little dirt from your hands or your plate doesn’t soil your heart and produce sin. If a person has sin in their hearts, that often causes sinful talk to come out of their mouth.

The Faith of the Syrophenician Mother

A mother, who was a Gentile from Syrophenicia, came to Jesus. First, a woman does not approach a teacher. Second, a Gentile does not approach a Jew. Still, the woman came, and Jesus served her. The woman’s daughter had a demon. Jesus rid the girl of the demon.

Healing a Deaf Man

Jesus continues to the Sea of Galilee. Some people brought a man to Jesus who was deaf and, as is usually the case with a deaf person, could not speak well. Jesus put his fingers in the man’s ears and touched his tongue.

“Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly.” — CSB

The reaction of those around was:

“He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” — CSB

Feeding Four Thousand More People

Chapter 8

Again, Jesus is speaking to large crowds of people in a remote place where food is not available. Concerned that the people will faint if they try to walk home without eating, Jesus gathers seven loaves of bread and a few fish. The followers distribute this food, the crowd of four thousand eats, and seven baskets are leftovers are collected.

Physical and Spiritual Leaven

Pharisees came to test Jesus. Tired with dealing with these tests that prove nothing, Jesus and the disciples left that place. They entered a boat to sail to the other side of the sea.

At this point, the disciples confuse physical and spiritual leaven. They only had one loaf of bread with them. That wasn't enough physical food, thought the disciples. Jesus tried to remind them of how they had fed thousands when they didn't have enough food. Why were they concerned with physical bread?

Jesus was concerned with the simile of spiritual leaven. Sin is like leaven in that just a little spreads and spreads. Any mention of leaven—an ingredient in physical food—led the disciples to think of physical food. There would come a time when the disciples understood these things.

Healing a Blind Man

In Bethsaida, people brought a blind man to Jesus asking that Jesus touch the man. Jesus healed the blind man but took a few unusual steps.

First, Jesus took the man outside the village. Second, Jesus touched the man two times before the man could see clearly. Finally, Jesus tells the man to not go back into the village.

Peter is Right About the Messiah

While walking on the road, Jesus asked his followers who they believed him to be. Peter finally answers, "You are the Messiah." (CSB)

Note: "Messiah" is the Hebrew word for "the anointed one" or "the chosen one." In Greek (the language of the New Testament), "the anointed" is "christos" which we have bent into the word "Christ" in English.

Peter is Wrong About the Fate of the Messiah

Jesus tells the followers, "...it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days." (CSB)

Peter rebuked Jesus about this. Jesus informs Peter that he was wrong, so wrong as to be on Satan's side of the issue.

Denial and Acceptance

In a famous talk, Jesus tells people,

"If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?" — CSB

In that time, the Romans used death on the cross for executions. The condemned man had to carry the cross on which he was to die to the place of execution. Carrying a cross meant death.

Following Jesus meant denying one's own life and accepting death to the world and its pleasures.

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon's mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
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7. Casting out the legion of demons (Chapter 5)
8. Raising a girl from the dead (Chapter 5)
9. Healing the woman suffering from bleeding (Chapter 5)
10. Feeding the five thousand (Chapter 6)
11. Walking on water (Chapter 6)
12. Healing by touching the clothes of Jesus (Chapter 6)
13. Ridding the Syrophenician girl of a demon (Chapter 7)
14. Healing a deaf man (Chapter 7)
15. Feeding the four thousand (Chapter 8)
16. Healing a blind man (Chapter 8)

Recap: Tests and Trick Questions

1. Why don't the disciples of Jesus fast? (Chapter 2)
2. Give a sign from heaven (Chapter 8)

Jesus is Transfigured

Chapter 9

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain—no one else comes with them.

Jesus is "transfigured," i.e., transformed into something more beautiful or elevated. The clothes Jesus was wearing became dazzling white. Elijah and Moses were standing with Jesus. Peter suggested building shelters for these three (Jesus, Elijah, and Moses). Odd idea, but that was his suggestion.

A cloud overshadowed Jesus, Elijah, and Moses and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him!" (CSB)

Elijah and Moses were gone.

As they walked down the mountain, Jesus instructed Peter, James, and John to tell no one about this until Jesus was raised from the dead. Given the events, it is not surprising that Peter, James, and John didn't understand what Jesus meant with his plain words.

Casting Out Demons, Belief, and Prayer

Jesus again casts a demon out of a boy. The boy's father had brought his possessed son to the disciples, but they tried in vain to cause the demon to leave.

Jesus tells the father, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him!" (CSB)

The father replied, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (CSB)

When the disciples asked about their failure, Jesus told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer." (CSB)

Death is Coming and Understanding is Still Lacking

For a second time, Jesus tells the disciples, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later." (CSB)

This is plain language. Still, the disciples "... did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him." (CSB)

Servant of All

The disciples had been arguing on the walk to Capernaum. Jesus asked about the dispute, but they didn't answer. Jesus knew what they wanted—to be considered the greatest. Jesus told them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all." (CSB)

Jesus illustrated the idea of being the least to be the most with small children. In that day, children were not considered to be of any value. The words of Jesus influence our view of precious children.

In the Name of Jesus

A legal matter was brought to Jesus by John. John had seen "others" casting out demons in the name of Jesus, but these were "others" and not one of their small group. Wasn't that wrong?

Jesus corrects John. Doing anything as small as providing a drink of water in the name of Jesus will bring a reward. A person doesn't need to be "in the right group" to do what is right and blessed.

Causing Someone to Fall Away

Following the concept of being in the right group or not, Jesus continues with the punishment for causing someone to follow anything but God. The punishment for leading a small child astray would be like drowning—a horrible death.

Leading someone to fall away was so bad that the cause must be removed. Even the most precious things must be cast off if they are leading a person astray.

Testing On the Law of Divorce

Chapter 10

Some Pharisees came to test Jesus. This time the tricky subject was divorce. Jesus plainly repeated the history of how God created male and female. God joined the two in marriage and mankind should not try to separate what God joined.

This was a tricky answer to a tricky question. It quieted the Pharisees.

Later, when Jesus was alone with the disciples, the disciples repeated the question. They wanted a simple answer. Jesus told them

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. Also, if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” — CSB

Blessing the Lowest

Jesus welcomed children, held them, and blessed them. The disciples didn’t like this.

Jesus silenced their protests by saying, “Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (CSB)

The Rich Young Ruler

A rich man who had lived a good life came to Jesus. This man sought eternal life. Jesus told him to give up what he treasured. The man walked away disappointed. He was rich and was not ready to give that away and follow Jesus.

Riches and the Kingdom of God

Jesus continued with a teaching about riches. Jesus told the listeners that with man, it was impossible to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus gave the famous quote, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (CSB) With God, however, all things were possible.

Death is Still Coming

Jesus again predicts the coming death,

“The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days.” — CSB

This time, the disciples didn’t wonder what Jesus meant. Perhaps they finally understood?

More Teaching on First and Last

While walking, the brothers James and John asked Jesus if Jesus would, “Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory.” (CSB) Jesus told them that such seats were not His to give.

The other disciples overheard that James and John wanted seats of glory. They didn't like this as they wanted the seats of glory.

Jesus again brings them back to the concept of serving first, then all else comes later. Jesus told them

“On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” — CSB

Healing a Blind Man

While leaving the city of Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus repeatedly cried out for mercy from Jesus. Bartimaeus cried this over and over to the point of annoying all those around.

The disciples finally called Bartimaeus to meet Jesus. Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” (CSB) He was healed immediately.

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon's mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
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11. Walking on water (Chapter 6)
12. Healing by touching the clothes of Jesus (Chapter 6)
13. Ridding the Syrophenician girl of a demon (Chapter 7)
14. Healing a deaf man (Chapter 7)
15. Feeding the four thousand (Chapter 8)
16. Healing a blind man (Chapter 8)
17. Casting out a demon (Chapter 9)
18. Healing the blind man named Bartimaeus (Chapter 10)

Recap: Tests and Trick Questions

1. Why don't the disciples of Jesus fast? (Chapter 2)
2. Give a sign from heaven (Chapter 8)
3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (Chapter 10)

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Chapter 11

As they neared Jerusalem, Jesus sent two disciples into a village to “borrow” a colt. If anyone asked any questions, Jesus told them to answer, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here right away.” (CSB) The disciples did as instructed and brought the colt to Jesus.

Jesus rode the colt into Jerusalem. The crowds put clothing and branches on the road to cushion the ride. The crowds shouted,

“Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom
of our father David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!” — CSB

It was late in the day after this entry, so Jesus and the twelve Apostles went out to Bethany.

The Barren Fig Tree

Leaving Bethany the next day, Jesus found a fig tree that had leaves, but no figs. Jesus spoke to the fig tree and said, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” (CSB)

In the Temple

They went back into Jerusalem to the temple. Jesus saw how some were cheating those who had come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices. The sellers were thieves, and Jesus treated them as such by overturning their tables and closing the market.

The chief priests and scribes in the Temple took notice. Jesus was popular—too popular for them. Jesus, however, had become so popular that these men feared killing Jesus because this would cause an uprising.

Each evening, Jesus and the followers would leave Jerusalem to return the next morning.

Back to the Fig Tree

The next morning on the way back to Jerusalem, they walked past the fig tree they had seen a couple of days earlier. The tree was completely withered. Peter noticed this unnatural occurrence and mentioned it to Jesus. Jesus answered

“Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.” — CSB

By What Authority?

Back in Jerusalem, the chief priests and scribes tried to trap Jesus. They needed a good reason to legally kill Jesus. Their trap question was, “By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do these things?” (CSB)

Jesus answered them with a question that they could not answer. There was a simple answer, but they did not want the crowds to hear that. They were trapped by their own pride and fear.

Recap: Miracles

1. Healing Simon’s mother-in-law (Chapter 1)
2. Healing the leper (Chapter 1)
3. Healing the paralytic (Chapter 2)
4. Healing the man with the shriveled hand (Chapter 3)
5. Removing demons from people (Chapter 3)
6. Quieting the sea (Chapter 4)
7. Casting out the legion of demons (Chapter 5)
8. Raising a girl from the dead (Chapter 5)
9. Healing the woman suffering from bleeding (Chapter 5)
10. Feeding the five thousand (Chapter 6)
11. Walking on water (Chapter 6)
12. Healing by touching the clothes of Jesus (Chapter 6)
13. Ridding the Syrophenician girl of a demon (Chapter 7)
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15. Feeding the four thousand (Chapter 8)
16. Healing a blind man (Chapter 8)
17. Casting out a demon (Chapter 9)
18. Healing the blind man named Bartimaeus (Chapter 10)
19. Wither the fig tree (Chapter 11)

Recap: Tests and Trick Questions

1. Why don’t the disciples of Jesus fast? (Chapter 2)
2. Give a sign from heaven (Chapter 8)
3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (Chapter 10)
4. By what authority does Jesus do what He does? (Chapter 11)

The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

Chapter 12

The parable begins with, “He began to speak to them in parables.” (CSB) Jesus continues to speak with the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

Jesus tells the story of a vineyard owner who leases the vineyard to some tenant farmers. The owner sends an employee to collect fruit from the farmers, but the farmers mistreat the employee and send him back empty-handed. Finally, the owner sends his son. The farmers kill the son.

Jesus concludes with

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill the farmers and give the vineyard to others. Haven’t you read this Scripture:
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This came about from the Lord
and is wonderful in our eyes?” — CSB

The chief priests, scribes, and elders were upset. They realized that they were the “bad guys” in the story. Again, their fear of the crowd outweighed their desire to kill Jesus.

Give to Ceasar

The chief priests, scribes, and elders tried another trap. They sent the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus with this trick question, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (CSB)

Jesus replies with the simple and famous phrase, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (CSB)

The Sadducees

Next come the Sadducees with their attempt to trap Jesus with a trick question. The Sadducees did not believe in any type of resurrection after death. They told a story of a woman who in turn married each of seven brothers who died in marriage.

Their question was, “In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?” (CSB)

Jesus answers them with another simple and famous response, “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven... He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” (CSB)

The Most Important Command

A scribe approaches Jesus with his own trick question. He asked, “Which command is the most important of all?” (CSB)

Jesus answered,

“The most important is Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.” — CSB

The Son Is Greater Than the Father

Jesus provides a riddle and answers it. The Messiah is a descendant of David. That is true in a physical and earthly sense. The Messiah is greater than David. That makes no sense as the predecessor in the lineage is always greater. In this case, however, Jesus has turned from the physical lineage to the spiritual realm. Everyone agrees that the Messiah is greater.

Scribes, Widows, and One Widow's Gift

Jesus then declares to “Beware of the scribes” as they “devour widows’ houses.” (CSB)

While Jesus was sitting across from the Temple Treasury, Jesus watched a poor widow put a tiny amount of money into the treasury. Jesus tells the disciples

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.” — CSB

Recap: Parables

1. A House Divided (Chapter 3)
2. Sower (Chapter 4)
3. Growing Seed (Chapter 4)
4. Mustard Seed (Chapter 4)
5. The vineyard owner (Chapter 12)

Recap: Tests and Trick Questions

1. Why don't the disciples of Jesus fast? (Chapter 2)
2. Give a sign from heaven (Chapter 8)
3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (Chapter 10)
4. By what authority does Jesus do what He does? (Chapter 11)
5. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? (Chapter 12)
6. In the resurrection, which man will be husband to the woman? (Chapter 12)
7. Which command is the most important? (Chapter 12)

Predictions of the Future

Chapter 13

Jesus tells the disciples several things about what will happen in the future.

The Temple

While walking, the disciples pointed to the magnificent architecture of the Temple area. Jesus told them, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another—all will be thrown down.” (CSB)

A little later, Peter, James, and John privately ask Jesus when the Temple will be thrown down. Jesus answered

“Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and they will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don’t be alarmed; these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.” — CSB

Flogging and Tribulation

Jesus warns the disciples of trouble coming. They will be given to local courts and flogged in the synagogues. Jesus comforts them with the knowledge that when they are called to testify in their defense, the Holy Spirit will give them what they need to say.

Jesus tells them that when they “see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be,” (CSB) they should immediately flee to the mountains for safety. Do not go back to the house for anything. Jesus describes the terrible times as “days of tribulation, the kind that hasn’t been from the beginning of creation until now and never will be again.” (CSB)

Jesus warns of people falsely claiming to be the Messiah with,

“Then if anyone tells you, ‘See, here is the Messiah! See, there!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. And you must watch! I have told you everything in advance.” — CSB

The Son of Man is Coming

Jesus provides some hope in that after this tribulation the Son of Man will come “in clouds with great power and glory.” (CSB)

Jesus reminds them of a simple fig tree. They can tell the coming of seasons by what happens to the fig tree. Jesus wants them to remember the sequence of events given to them. When they see one happen, they will know what comes next.

Still, the time of all this is a mystery to all but God.

“Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father. Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming.” — CSB

Plotting to Kill Jesus

Chapter 14

The chief priests and the scribes now plotted to kill Jesus. Enough was enough; it was time to act. They, however, realized that they had to wait until the festival, i.e., the Passover, was complete because they feared riots among the crowds.

The Anointing in Advance of Burial

Jesus was at Bethany in the home of Simon the leper. While reclining at the dinner table, a woman poured a jar of expensive perfume on Jesus' head. Some of the people there were indignant. The perfume could have been sold with the money going to the poor.

Jesus quieted the protests by telling them, "You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have me." (CSB)

Aside from this anointing, Judas went to the chief priests to discuss betraying Jesus to them. Judas had inside information on the movements of Jesus. That was valuable to the chief priests in their desire to quietly kill Jesus. Money was discussed, and all parties proceeded.

Preparing the Passover Feast

It was time for the Passover festival. Jesus sent two disciples into Jerusalem to a place Jesus described. The two disciples found everything as Jesus had said and they prepared the Passover meal.

Eating the Passover Feast

While eating the Passover meal, Jesus told the disciples, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." (CSB) They all denied this prediction.

As part of the meal, Jesus told the disciples that the broken bread was His body and the cup of the "fruit of the vine" was His blood of the covenant.

At the conclusion of the meal, they sang a hymn and went back outside of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives.

Predicting Denials and Praying

At the Mount of Olives, Jesus told the disciples that they would soon all runaway with fear. Peter spoke the loudest to deny that he would ever leave the side of Jesus no matter what. Jesus replied, "today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." (CSB)

In a place called Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John along to a separate place. Jesus told the three to stay awake and watch. Jesus went to be alone and prayed, "Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." (CSB)

After praying, Jesus returned to find Peter, James, and John asleep. Jesus woke them and went back alone to pray. This occurred three times—Jesus praying alone while the three fell asleep contrary to what Jesus asked them to do.

Finally, Jesus woke the three and told them, "Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near." (CSB)

The Kiss of Death and Capture

As Jesus predicted, Judas—who knew where Jesus would be and when—arrives with a mob carrying clubs and spears. Using an arranged signal, Judas kissed Jesus showing that Jesus was the one to grab.

The disciples and all the other followers ran away. A young man, who wore nothing but a cloth, was so scared and ran away so fast that he literally ran out of his clothes.

The Sanhedrin

The mob took Jesus into Jerusalem to the Sanhedrin—an assembly of the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. This trial was a farce but was staged poorly. The lying witnesses confused their stories and contradicted one another. Jesus stood silently and watched them stumble all over themselves.

Finally, the high priest asked, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (CSB)

Jesus answered, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.” (CSB)

That was it—blasphemy against God deserving death.

The Denials by Peter

As Jesus had predicted, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. An annoying maidservant of one of the high priests wouldn’t leave Peter alone. Two times she pointed to Peter and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” (CSB) Peter denied it both times.

The third denial was from a group of people standing around who had heard what the maidservant said. This denial contained cursing and swearing.

Peter remembered what Jesus had told him. Peter “broke down and wept.” (CSB)

Pilate

Chapter 15

The chief priests, after consulting with the entire Sanhedrin, took a bound Jesus to Pilate.

Pilate asked the crucial question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (CSB)

Jesus replied, “You say so.” (CSB)

Pilate understood that this trial of Jesus was a sham. The established and official religious leaders were jealous of a poor man from Nazareth who was followed and loved by the crowds. Pilate had an unofficial policy of releasing a condemned person at Passover time. Pilate suggested releasing Jesus, but the chief priests urged the crowd to ask for a man named Barabbas instead.

Bowing to public pressure, Pilate released Barabbas, had Jesus flogged, and sent Jesus to be executed by crucifixion.

A group of soldiers, bored with the entire episode, mocked Jesus. They dressed Jesus as a king in a purple robe and a crown of thorns and bowed before Jesus.

The Crucifixion

The soldiers took Jesus to the place where prisoners were executed. It was called Golgotha or "Place of the Skull." The soldiers gambled to determine who would get the clothing of Jesus. They put a sign above the head of Jesus with the words, "The King of the Jews."

The crowds passed by the execution scene. As the soldiers had done, the crowds mocked this poor fellow from Nazareth. They misquoted things Jesus had said. Even the two men being executed with Jesus made fun of Jesus.

The Death

Jesus died at three in the afternoon. The final words of Jesus were, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (CSB)

In attendance were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. The curtain of the Temple was torn in two from the top down.

The Burial

When it was evening, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to learn that Jesus was already dead. Crucifixion usually took longer for a person to die. Once the death was confirmed, Pilate granted Joseph the corpse.

Joseph bought a new linen cloth, wrapped Jesus in the cloth, and placed the body into a new tomb in a cave. They rolled a large rock over the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw the location of the tomb.

The Resurrection

Chapter 16

After the Sabbath day, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to anoint the corpse of Jesus. They walked towards the tomb not having any idea how to move the stone that closed the entrance. They went anyways; when they reached the tomb, they saw that the stone had been rolled away clearing the entrance.

The three women entered the tomb and saw a man dressed in a white robe sitting.

The man in the white robe told them,

“You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’” — CSB

The three women, astonished and trembling, ran from the tomb. They didn’t deliver the message from the man in the white robe. They were too afraid to tell anything to anyone.

The Longer Ending of Mark: Appearances of the Risen Lord

After the resurrection and on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. She went to the other followers who were gathered in mourning. She told them that she had seen the risen Jesus. They didn’t believe her.

Later that day, Jesus appeared to two others “in a different form” (CSB). These two told the other followers who, once again, didn’t believe what they heard.

Later, Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples (the twelve minus Judas). He rebuked these eleven because they didn’t believe what witnesses had told them. The testimony of the witnesses confirmed what Jesus had told the disciples three times.

Jesus told the disciples what we call “The Great Commision,”

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes; [aa] if they should drink anything deadly, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well.” — CSB

Jesus ascended to heaven and “sat down at the right hand of God.” (CSB)

The disciples preached everywhere. God worked with them by giving them the power to perform miraculous signs.

Recaps

Recap: Followers

Jesus now has twelve men whom He calls apostles. These are:

1. Peter
2. James
3. John
4. Andrew
5. Phillips
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. Thomas

9. James
10. Thaddaeus
11. Simon
12. Judas Iscariot

Recap: Parables

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