

Mark: A Commentary for a Young Christian

Karen Hess

Ministry Training Program - Phillips Theological Seminary

Introduction to the New Testament

Dr. Kris Tenny-Brittian

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## Mark: A Commentary for a Young Christian

1. Name of Book: The Gospel According to Mark
2. Author: It is not really known who wrote this gospel, because Mark's name was not put on this document until hundreds of years after the book was first written (The CEB Study Bible [CEB], 2013, p. 65 NT; Lettsume, 2014, p. 173; Hurtado, 1989, p. 6; The Harper Collins Study Bible [HC], 1993, p. 1802). Early Christian history says that Mark (or John Mark, as he was also known) traveled with Paul, served as an interpreter for Peter in Rome, and wrote this gospel story (Biblegateway.com, 2021, para. 4, 5; CEB, 2013, p. 65 NT; Lettsume, 2014, p. 173, Perkins, 1995, p. 517).
  - A. What is a "gospel"? *Gospel* comes from the Old English word *god* (meaning "good") and *spel* (meaning "news, a story.") "For Christians, the term "good news" refers to the story of Jesus Christ's birth, death, and resurrection" (vocabulary.com, 2021a).
3. Date written: Mark was the first of the gospels to be written down (CEB, 2013, p. 65 NT; Perkins, 1995, p. 511, 517; Lettsume, 2014, p. 174; Sumney, p. 240). Although the exact year it was written is not known, the book was composed sometime between 50 and 75 CE when tensions were high in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, between the Jews and the Romans who were occupying their land (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 0:36; CEB, 2013, p. 66 NT; History.com, 2019, para. 3; Lettsume, 2014, p. 173; HC, 1993, p. 1801; Hurtado, 1989, p. 8). Additional text was added to the end of the book later, sometime between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (HC, 1993, p. 1951; NISB, 2003, p. 1844).
4. To whom written: Mark was written for a community of Christians living under Roman rule (CEB, 2013, p. 66 NT; Sumney, p. 240). This community included both Jews and

Gentiles (Lettsome, 2014, p. 173; Meeks, p. 1802; Perkins, 1995, p. 518; Hurtado, 1989, p. 6; Sumney, p. 240). The Christians for whom it was written were suffering because they were being persecuted, and they were looking for a Messiah to save them (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 0:36; HC, 1993, p. 1801).

- A. What is a Gentile? A Gentile is a person who is not Jewish (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).
  - B. What is a Messiah? A Messiah is a royal person (sometimes called the Son of God), who Israel was expecting to come and set up a kingdom here on earth (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 0:25).
5. Why it was written:
- A. This gospel was written as a response to the conflict between the Jews and Romans and the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE (Lettsome, 2014, p. 173, 186; HC, 1993, p. 1802; Perkins, 1995, p. 517). The persecuted and suffering Christians hoped that God would send a Messiah to come and overthrow the Romans, rescue them, and establish God's Kingdom (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 0:36; CEB, 2013, p. 66 NT; HC, 1993, p. 1801).
  - B. The author of Mark's Gospel wanted to tell Jesus' followers that even though they were suffering they should "hold on, keep the faith," and wait for God, because God's Kingdom would soon arrive through Jesus - deliverance was on the way (CEB, 2013, p. 66 NT).
  - C. Mark wants people to know that Jesus' salvation is for everyone – both Jews and Gentiles (Sumney, p. 240).

6. Why it's important to be familiar with this Book:

- A. The Gospel of Mark tells us that what Jesus did for us in his death and resurrection is more important than anything else (Perkins, 1995, p. 529; Hurtado, 1989, p. 9, 18).
- B. There was a lot of secrecy and confusion among Jesus' followers in this gospel. People had different ideas of what the Messiah would be like, and even the disciples were confused (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 01:52; Hurtado, 1989, p. 10). This book explains that Jesus commanded secrecy because he wanted everyone to understand that his life wasn't just about teaching and doing miracles, but that his crucifixion and resurrection were what true salvation was all about (Hurtado, 1989, p. 10).
1. What is salvation? Salvation is the deliverance from the consequences of sin (Dictionary.com, 2021).
- C. The Gospel of Mark teaches us that Jesus understands our struggles and our feelings because he felt them, too (Miller, 2010, p. 19). The motivation behind Jesus' miracles was compassion (Lettsome, 2014, p. 195). He became angry at times, and confrontational (CEB, 2013, 2013, p. 65 NT; Miller, 2010, p. 19). Jesus was sometimes unhappy (The New Interpreter's Study Bible [NISB], 2003, p. 1839).
- D. This gospel tells us that to follow Jesus means that we are to serve others (Lettsome, 2014, p. 178, 197; Hurtado, 1989, p. 11). In this book Jesus explains that sacrifice and service are required, and he shows us how to deal with them (CEB, 2013, p. 66 NT; Lettsome, 2014, p. 199; Hurtado, 1989, p. 67).

- E. While this book explains that discipleship is not easy, it also shows us that Jesus will not abandon us. He is ever-present and ready to help us through life's difficulties and offers us forgiveness and hope (Perkins, 1995, p. 604; Williamson, 1983, p. 16).
- F. Readers of this gospel see that the disciples were not perfect. They didn't understand Jesus' message, they denied knowing him, their faith was weak at times, and they even ran away when Jesus faced death (CEB, 2013, 2013, p. 65; Perkins, 1995, p. 513, 604; Williamson, 1983, p. 14-15). It is comforting to know that these disciples exhibited the same enthusiasm, weaknesses, and failures of all followers of Jesus (Perkins, 1995, p. 513; Williamson, 1983, p. 16).
- G. In this Gospel Jesus showed us that loving God by caring for one another is more important than adhering to rules interpreted by man; it is Jesus' challenge of the rules that contribute to religious leaders wanting to kill him (Perkins, 1995, pp. 558-559).
- H. Jesus showed us how power and status should be used. This gospel shows us that Jesus has all the authority and power of God, and he used that power and authority to help those in need (Lettsome, 2014, p. 180; Miller, 2010, p. 19; Perkins, 1995, p. 511, 543; Hurtado, 1989, pp. 10-11, 26).
7. Famous passages and verses you'll find in this book:
- A. Mark 1:1: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Perkins, 1995, p. 1804).
1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:

- a. The author immediately tells the reader what the book will be about – the message of good news about Jesus, who is the primary character in this story (Williamson, 1983, p. 28; NISB, 2003, p. 1804).
  - b. In no other Gospel is Jesus’ humanity or his heavenly authority more obvious (Williamson, 1983, p. 29).
    - i. The designation “Christ” is a title meaning “anointed one,” or “Messiah” (Perkins, 1995, p. 528; NISB, 2003, p. 1804). Peter’s recognition that Jesus is “the Christ” is the turning point of this Gospel (Perkins, 1995, p. 527).
    - ii. The designation “Son of God” was a Greek title for a “divine man” (NISB, 2003, p. 1804).
2. The designations attributed to Jesus in this first sentence are repeated in Mark 1:11, Mark 3:11, Mark 5:7, Mark 9:7, Mark 3:11, Mark 15:39, Matthew 4:3, and Matthew 14:33.
- B. Mark 1:17: “‘Come, follow me,’ he said, ‘and I’ll show you how to fish for people’” (CEB, 2013, p. 69 NT).
1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:
    - a. Jesus indicates his willingness to share his wisdom with his followers so that more people can come to know God and be brought into God’s Kingdom (CEB, 2013, p. 69 NT).
    - b. Jesus calls us to actively take on his mission work - not to just be bystanders (Hurtado, 1989, p. 22).
  2. This invitation is repeated in Matthew 4:19.

C. Mark 3:35: “Whoever does God’s will is my brother, sister, and mother” (CEB, 2013, p. 73 NT).

1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:

- a. Jesus defines “family” in terms of loyalty to God, as opposed to blood relatives (CEB, 2013, p. 73 NT; Lettsome, 2014, p. 183).
- b. Discipleship can cause strained family relationships, so Jesus offers a new type of family to all those who will follow him (CEB, 2013, p. 73 NT).
- c. Jesus includes “sister” and “mother” in his description of family, showing that Jesus does not discriminate according to sex, but designates family according to their actions (Lettsome, 2014, quoting Pseudo-Jerome, p. 183).

2. This verse is also quoted in Matthew 12:50 and Luke 8:21.

D. Mark 5:34: “He responded, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease’” (CEB, 2013, p. 77 NT).

1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:

- a. Faith, trust, and belief are important concepts in Mark’s Gospel. Faith isn’t just about believing something...it is also about how faith is demonstrated. (CEB, 2013, p. 90 NT).
- b. This verse is set within the context that a crowd does not believe that the girl has been healed yet one person – her father – has faith (Lettsome, 2014, p. 188). This verse tells us that, even though it is sometimes hard to be alone in a crowd of unbelievers, faith in Jesus has its own rewards.

- c. Jesus is telling us that the difference between failure and success is faith and trust in God (NISB, 2003, p. 1818).
  2. The concept of this verse is repeated throughout the Bible:
    - a. Mark 10:52: “Jesus said, ‘Go, your faith has healed you.’ At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way” (CEB, 2013, p. 89 NT).
    - b. The emphasis on faith and healing are repeated in Mark 5:36, Mark 6:50, Mark 9:23, Matthew 9:22 and Luke 7:50 (CEB, 2013, p. 77 NT). Mark 5:36 is repeated in Mark 9:23 and Luke 8:50. Mark 9:24 tells us that “...All things are possible for the one who has faith” (CEB, 2013, 85 NT).
- E. Mark 9:40: “Whoever isn’t against us is for us” (CEB, 2013, p. 86 NT).
  1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:
    - a. The author’s positive note can be used to bring unity to today’s Christian community, where we should be focusing on what unites us – the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – as opposed to the policies and rules which divide us (Williamson, 1983, p. 173).
  2. This verse has been used in both secular and biblical manners:
    - a. President George W. Bush based a portion of his post 9-11 speech on the idea of this verse as he said, “...Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (Bush, as quoted by The Washington Post, 2001, para. 58).

- b. This verse was repeated by the authors of Matthew and Luke (Matthew 12:30, Luke 11:23).
- F. Mark 10:14: "...Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children" (CEB, 2013, p. 87 NT).
1. It is important to be aware of this verse because:
    - a. The Kingdom of God does not belong to the wealthiest or greatest, but to the "least;" in blessing the children Jesus shows that the blessed are those whom the world has given the least amount of power or status (Lettsome, 2014, p. 198).
    - b. In this verse Jesus tells the Christian community that children play an important role in God's Kingdom (Williamson, 1983, p. 178).
  2. This passage is like Mark 9:36-37. It is repeated in Matthew 19:14 and Luke 18:16. The concept is repeated in Mark 10: 31 and 10:43-44.
- G. Mark 12:29-31: "...Our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You will love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these'" (CEB, 2013, p. 92 NT).
1. It is important to be aware of this passage because:
    - a. Jesus' teaching about the greatest commandment is establishes love as the foundation of Christian life and faith (Williamson, 1983, p. 225-226).
    - b. There is an order in which we are to love: first love God fully, with our whole selves (Williamson, 1983, p. 227). We are then to love others in

the same way that we would love ourselves: with tolerance, making time for them, and wanting only the best for them (Williamson, 1983, pp. 227-228).

- c. Mark's account of this instruction is the only one in which Jesus emphasizes that we are also to love God with all our mind, which shows that what we think about is important, too (Williamson, 1983, p. 227).
- d. Jesus' instruction that loving God and loving neighbor are more important than anything else emphasizes that caring for others is more important than our jobs, our families, our political causes, or our church rules (Perkins, 1995, p. 678-679).
- e. Mark's account is the only New Testament account in which Jesus is recorded as saying, "Our God is the one Lord," which is important as we consider how we sometimes prioritize other things over God (Williamson, 1983, p. 226).

- 2. In this verse Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Joshua 22:5 of the Hebrew Scriptures, passages that predate this one by generations (CEB, 2013, p. 260 OT, 325 OT, 92 NT; Perkins, 1995, p. 678). Jesus' instructions are repeated in Matthew 22:37-40 and Luke 10:27.

## 8. **Events, stories, and verses of which you should be aware:**

- A. **Absence of Stories:** In the Gospel of Mark there is no story of Jesus' birth, no genealogy, and no tales of his childhood. This Gospel leaves out many of Jesus' teachings (CEB, 2013, p. 65 NT). There is no story of Jesus appearing to his disciples

after his resurrection or of his ascension into heaven except for the passages that were added later and are not found in every translation (Perkins, 1995, p. 732; Williamson, 1983, p. 286). Information about Jesus' background is only shared incidentally (Hurtado, 1989, p. 9).

1. If you want to learn more about Jesus' genealogy, birth, and childhood look to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Luke and John both tell of Jesus' appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, and Luke tells of Jesus' ascension into heaven.
2. It is important to know this because:
  - a. The absence of these stories in Mark's Gospel focuses the reader's attention on the adult ministry and good news of Jesus (Hurtado, 1989, p. 9; Perkins, 1995, p. 529).
  - b. Beginning the Gospel abruptly, with Jesus as an adult, highlights the accomplishment of God's promises of deliverance and salvation (Perkins, 1995, p. 529).
  - c. Not including these stories gives the reader a sense of urgency, as the entire story of this Gospel races toward the highpoint of Jesus' crucifixion (CEB, 2013, p. 65 NT).
  - d. Ending the Gospel with the women fleeing from the tomb in terror - after the angel has assured them to have no fear and has instructed them to tell the disciples that Jesus goes ahead of them - leaves readers with the choice on how the story should end (Williamson, 1983, p. 286). Do we trust Jesus to guide us, or do we live in fear?

#### B. John the Baptist's Ministry (Mark 1:2-8)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 3:1-12, Luke 3:1-18, John 1:19-28, Acts 13:24-25, and Acts 19:4. This Gospel begins by quoting Isaiah 40:3 (Perkins, 1995, p. 530).
2. John was a Jewish prophet who challenges people to prepare for the arrival of God's Kingdom by changing their hearts and lives for God's forgiveness (CEB, 2013, p. 68 NT). People came to the Jordan River to confess their sins and be baptized by John. He told everyone that someone else is coming to baptize them with the Holy Spirit, implying that God was coming, and that God's power will free the oppressed people (Perkins, 1995, p. 531). John's message incited hope for restoration and deliverance (Lettsome, 2014, p. 175; Perkins, 1995, p. 531).
3. This is an important story to know because:
  - a. This passage shows the continuation of God's promised love for God's people. John showed that the promises God made to the Israelites were coming true as he pointed people to Jesus (Williamson, 1983, p. 30).
  - b. John encouraged the people not only to stand strong in their suffering but to have hope, a message that is still important for us to hear.

#### C Jesus' Baptism (Mark 1:9-11)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-22, John 1: 32-34.
2. Jesus comes to the Jordan River, where John is, and John baptizes him in the river. As Jesus comes out of the water the sky splits apart and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down to Jesus. A voice from heaven declares, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness" (CEB, 2013, p. 68 NT). Unlike other baptisms that had taken place before this, or since, the heavens split and God's voice was

heard, claiming Jesus as God's Son (Williamson, 1983, p. 35). His unique status as God's Son is confirmed by the descent of God's Spirit (Perkins, 1995, p. 534).

3. This story is important because:
  - a. This is the first story of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Mark, indicating that nothing before mattered more than Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection (Lettsome, 2014, p. 175).
  - b. The significance of this story is that in this story the identity of Jesus is established, just as our identity as God's people is established in our baptism (Williamson, 1983, p. 35-36). Just as God claimed Jesus as God's Son so, too, does God claim us as God's children.
  - c. This story tells us that God is accessible to us (Lettsome, 2014, quoting Juel, p. 176). Because of Jesus there are no barriers between God and people.

#### D. The Question about the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28)

1. This story is also told in Matthew 12:1-8 and Luke 6:1-5. The question in this story revolves around the commandment regarding the Sabbath found in Exodus 20:10 and 31:15. Exodus 34:21 specifically prohibits harvesting on the Sabbath (HC, 1993, p. 1921). A story from 1 Samuel 21:1-6 is told by Jesus.

- a. What is the Sabbath? The Sabbath is "...the Biblical day of rest" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2021).

2. Jesus and his disciples walk through a field on the Sabbath. The disciples pick grain from the field to eat. The religious leaders accuse them of violating the Sabbath, which was punishable by death, according to Exodus 31:15. Jesus, being responsible for his disciples, defends them (CEB, 2013, p. 71 NT; Williamson, 1983, p. 73). Jesus tells a

story about David of the Bible, gathering food from the synagogue to feed to his hungry friends. Jesus says that Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath, and that he (Jesus) is master of the Sabbath (v. 27-28).

3. This story is important because:

a. This story demonstrates that God made Sabbath for the benefit of people (CEB, 2013, p. 71; Williamson, 1983, p. 73, 75).

b. Jesus points out that human need is more important than ceremonial laws (Williamson, 1983, p. 75-76).

c. This story highlights the fact that religion is about more than just about rule-keeping (Williamson, 1983, p. 76).

d. Jesus' claim that he is Lord of the Sabbath reminds us that our day of rest is to be used to honor God (Williamson, 1983, p. 76).

e. Jesus' question about what is lawful on the Sabbath tells us that we must choose: to do nothing on the Sabbath is not an option; nor is it appropriate to spend the day in self-indulgence. The Sabbath should be observed in the same spirit that Jesus' showed, such as in service to others that restores both the person who receives the kindness and the one who provides it (Perkins, 1995, p. 557; Williamson, 1983, p. 76).

E. The Parable of the "Seed Growing Secretly" (Mark 4:26-29; NISB, 2003, p. 1815)

1. While Matthew and Luke share many of the same parables that are recorded in Mark, this parable is not found in either Matthew or Luke (Haverford, 2009). It is the parable of the "seed growing secretly" (NISB, 2003, p. 1815).

- a. What is a parable? A parable is “a short and simple story that teaches a religious or moral lesson” (Vocabulary.com, 2021b).
2. This passage provides a picture of a harvest that comes from “invisible beginnings,” as the farmer scatters the seed on the ground and does not tend to it, yet it grows and yields a bountiful harvest (Perkins, 1995, p. 578).
3. This story is important because:
  - a. It shows us that God can use our insignificant or seemingly unsuccessful acts of ministry to produce great results (Hurtado, 1989, p. 77).
  - b. We see that growth of God’s Kingdom happens in ways we don’t understand, and all by the power of God (Williamson, 1983, p. 97-98; NISB, 2003, p. 1815).
  - c. This story teaches us that Christians should not give up, as God will use power that we do not understand to produce great results from the ways in which we share Jesus (Perkins, 1995, p. 578).

#### F. The Sending of the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 10:1-42 and Luke 9:1-6.
2. Jesus, having previously selected twelve men to follow him in his mission work, sends them out in pairs to proclaim the gospel message (CEB, 2013, p. 77 NT). Even though they have repeatedly failed to fully understand his message, he gives them authority to cast out demons, heal the sick, and proclaim the gospel message (Perkins, 1995, p. 594; Williamson, 1983, p. 118). In giving them this authority Jesus is making them an extension of his own authority and office (Hurtado, 1989, p. 93). His instructions to them are to take no food, no money, and no extra clothing as they trust God to provide for their needs (Perkins, 1995, p. 595).

3. This story is important because:

a. It showcases Mark's message that the disciples, flawed as they were, were sent by Jesus to continue his ministry. Likewise, we do not take up ministry to fill our own needs, but we are sent by Jesus to share his gospel message (Perkins, 1995, p. 596).

b. Just as the disciples were reliant on God for all their needs so, too, are we to trust God for everything (Williamson, 1983, p. 119).

c. This story shows us that we do not have to be perfect to follow Jesus, but we must be willing.

#### G. Peter's Confession (Mark 8:27-33)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 16:13-23, Luke 9:19-22, and John 6:69.

2. At the time of this story Jesus' ministry is coming to an end and he is looking towards Jerusalem, where he will be arrested, tried, crucified, and rise from the dead (Williamson, 1983, p. 150). People have confused Jesus with John the Baptist or with Elijah, so Jesus asks the disciples to tell him who they say he is. Peter immediately declares that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus cautions him not to say anything to anyone about him. When Jesus begins to tell the disciples of his upcoming death, Peter rebukes him, indicating that he does not fully understand Jesus' role as the Messiah (Perkins, 1995, p. 624). Jesus then scolded Peter, stressing how important it was that the disciples understand his full identity (Bibleproject.org, n.d., 02:17).

3. This passage is important because:

a. This is a pivotal story in Mark's Gospel as it follows the first half of the Gospel, which questions the identity of Jesus; it provides a confession as to Jesus'

identity; it then leads into the second half of Mark's story about how Jesus was to fulfill his identity as Messianic King (Bibleproject.org, n.d., 0:49, 0:57, 1:03).

b. From this point forward, the Gospel focuses on Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection as the way in which Jesus' identity would be revealed

(Bibleproject.org, n.d., 0:57).

c. Up to this point only God or demons have testified to the truth of Jesus' identity (Hurtado, 1989, p. 135).

d. This is a turning point because it signifies that Peter recognizes the true significance of Jesus (Perkins, 1995, p. 527; Hurtado, 1989, p. 135).

e. Jesus' command of silence as to his identity is based on the timing of Peter's confession, as Jesus had not yet completed his work through his suffering and death (Perkins, 1995, p. 623).

f. As we read this story further, Peter again shows that he does not fully understand who Jesus is. This is important because even when we have doubts or questions, Jesus still is our Savior. Jesus doesn't change just because we don't fully understand.

g. In answering the question about who Jesus is, we learn who we are as followers of Jesus (Williamson, 1983, p. 157).

#### H. Taking up the cross (Mark 8: 34-9:1)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 10:32-39, Matthew 16:24-27, Luke 14:26-33, Luke 12:20-21, Luke 17:33, and refers in context to Psalm 49:7-8.

2. Mark's Gospel emphasizes that to be a follower of Jesus is a costly choice (CEB, 2013, p. 84 NT; Williamson, 1983, p. 154-155). Discipleship is described in terms of anguish

and self-denial, persecution, and possible death (CEB, 2013, p. 84 NT; Perkins, 1995, p. 627). It is witnessing to the truth of the gospel that Jesus' followers suffer, because the disciples live in an era that was hostile to God (Perkins, 1995, p. 627, Hurtado, 1989, p. 138). Jesus warns that rejecting Jesus will bring about Jesus' eternal rejection of that person in front of God, but Jesus also promises that rejecting oneself for the gospel will bring life in the Kingdom of God (Perkins, 1995, p. 626).

3. This is an important story because:

- a. It emphasizes both the earthly cost and the heavenly reward of following Jesus.
- b. We live in a world where self-indulgence and material reward are prized, and it is difficult to put God first and to treat others as we would treat ourselves.
- c. If we stay true to the path Jesus has set, Jesus will speak for us when we come before God and we will experience the glory that it is to belong to God forever.

#### I. The Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-10)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 17:1-9 and Luke 9:28-35. Portions of this story reference Exodus 24:15-18, Deuteronomy 8:15, and Daniel 7:9, 15-18.

2. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the top of a high mountain, where they are joined by Moses and Elijah (Hurtado, 1989, p. 144). Jesus is changed into a "more divine figure" as his clothing becomes white, the symbol of purity and divinity (NISB, 2003, p. 1825). A voice from a cloud names Jesus as God's Son, like the story of Jesus' baptism, and commands the disciples to listen to him (Hurtado, 1989, p. 145-146). The disciples become terrified and, again, confused (NISB, 2003, p. 1826; Perkins, 1995, p. 630; Lettsume, 2014, p. 237). Instead of simply commanding the disciples to stay silent about

what they saw, as before, Jesus tells them to stay silent until after he is raised from the dead (Perkins, 1995, p. 631; Hurtado, 1989, p. 146).

3. This story is important because:

- a. It reveals the dual nature of Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God. In human form, Jesus ascends the mountain and receives the transformation that displays his holiness.
- b. Jesus commands the disciples to keep silent about his holiness until after he is raised from the dead, because it is only through the cross that Jesus is really Son of God (Perkins, 1995, p. 512).
- c. The disciples are again confused but, like the disciples, we can sometimes have tremendous, awe-inspiring experiences yet not understand that it is God's work or presence we are experiencing.

J. Entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 21:1-9, Luke 19:28-40, and John 12:12-19. The details of this story reference 2 Kings 9:13 and Zechariah 9:9 and combines two psalms: Psalm 118:26 and Psalm 148:1 (Perkins, 1995, p. 658-659).
2. In this story Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate a religious celebration (Hurtado, 1989, p. 179). As they approach Jerusalem, Jesus sends two of his disciples into town to retrieve a colt for him that he knew was tied up just inside the village. Jesus rides the colt into Jerusalem, ahead of the disciples, among crowds of people who are also on their way to the festival (Hurtado, 1989, p. 179). The people throw their garments on the road ahead of him as they would for a king and wave branches, shouting "Hosanna/Save Now!" (CEB, 2013, p. 89 NT; Perkins, 1995, p. 658).

Yet it is with quiet dignity and a hidden majesty, not acknowledging the crowds or calling attention to himself, that Jesus arrives in Jerusalem (Williamson, 1983, p. 205).

3. This story is important because:

- a. It shows Jesus, the Messianic King, in a very humble state, staying silent when people around him are waving branches, spreading their coats before him, and shouting “religious slogans” (Hurtado, 1989, p. 179; Williamson, 1983, p. 205).
- b. Jesus came into the city where he would face his crucifixion and death, yet he came. He did not hesitate. This is a lesson for Christians everywhere as we struggle to live like Jesus – thinking of the humility and determination with which he faced his calling.

K. The Passion and Death of Jesus (Mark 14:1 – 15:47)

- a. What is the “Passion” of Jesus? “The word Passion comes from the Latin word for suffering,” and the Passion of Jesus is the story of his “arrest, trial and suffering,” ending “with his execution by crucifixion” (BBC, 2009, para. 1, 2).

I. The Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:12-26).

1. The details of this Passover celebration differ slightly in Mark’s Gospel from those detailed in Matthew 26:17-30, Luke 22:7-23, and John 13:1-30. Traditions handed down over generations might have changed, and it is possible that Mark’s readers were not concerned with the details of the meal (Perkins, 1995, p. 702-703). Paul speaks of this final meal of Jesus and his disciples as “The Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20, NISB, 2003).
2. The focus of the meal in Mark’s Gospel is Jesus’ death as Jesus predicts the disciple’s betrayal - and the disciples then question him about it (Perkins, 1995, p.

703). Jesus associates the cup with the blood of the covenant associated with Exodus 12:7 and 24:8 (Lettsome, 2014, p. 206; Williamson, 1983, p. 253). Jesus also assures the disciples that his death is not the end of the story, as in verse 25 he speaks of drinking wine “in a new way in God’s Kingdom” (CEB, 2013, p. 96 NT; Perkins, 1995, p. 704).

3. This story is important because:

- a. In celebrating the Passover together, Jesus and his disciples gather as a family, as Jesus has previously talked about (Williamson, 1983, p. 251).
- b. This story is the basis for the church’s participation in Holy Communion – an act which celebrates the unity of believers with Christ and with each other as a family of believers (Williamson, 1983, p. 254).
- c. The importance of this story is that it reminds us that Jesus’ death is not the end of his life. In recording Jesus’ words, Mark tells us that there is hope – there is a new Kingdom of God which will come and where Jesus will gather us to him and where we will celebrate (Perkins, 1995, p. 705).
- d. Another important note is that in asking Jesus if they would be the one to deny him, each disciple was recognizing that it was possible for them to be weak and to turn from him. This is important as it shows us that we are not alone in our weakness, but that there is hope beyond our own selves.

## II. Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)

1. This story is also found in Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 22:39-46.
2. Jesus and his disciples leave the Passover meal and go to Gethsemane, a garden located on the Mount of Olives (Britannica, 2021). Jesus takes Peter, James, and

John with him and asks them to stay awake while he prays (Perkins, 1995, p. 707). Peter, who will soon deny Jesus, and James and John, who fought over their places in God's Kingdom (Mark 10:37), fail Jesus as they fall asleep (Perkins, 1995, p. 707). This happens three times. Jesus prays for God to spare him but ends his prayer with the acknowledgment that God's will is to be done (Perkins, 1995, p. 708).

3. This story is important because:

- a. The primary importance of this story lies in Jesus' commitment to do God's will, compared with the disciples' inability to do as Jesus asks (Hurtado, 1989, p. 242; Williamson, 1983, p. 259).
- b. Jesus displays his humanity in this story as he feels despair, sadness, and anxiety (vs. 33-34), yet he displays utter obedience to God as he relies on God's will for his life (Hurtado, 1989, p. 242).
- c. In verse 38 Jesus tells the disciples to pray so that they won't give in when tempted. This lesson is for all believers. We are to remain in relationship with God, always seeking God and his will, no matter the cost.

### III. Jesus' Arrest and Trials (Mark 14:43 – 15:15)

1. These stories are also found in Matthew 26:47-27:26, Luke 22:47-23:25, and John 18:2-19:16.
2. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, betrays Jesus and leads an armed crowd to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. All the disciples flee, leaving Jesus alone with the violent mob. Jesus is first taken to the religious leaders and legal experts, where

people lie about Jesus. Meanwhile, Peter is outside in the courtyard and denies knowing Jesus three times. Realizing what he has done, Peter breaks down crying. Jesus is then taken to Pilate, the Roman governor. It was customary during the Passover festival for a prisoner to be released. Pilate offers to release Jesus, but the angry crowd screams for Jesus to be crucified.

3. This story is important because:

a. It shows the contrast in how we as Jesus' followers might behave. First, an armed violent mob comes to apprehend Jesus, treating him as a criminal (Perkins, 1995, p. 710). Jesus, who has all power and authority of God, uses none of it in his defense. Acting with courage and dignity, he is a model for believers under persecution (Hurtado, 1989, p. 248; Williamson, 1983, p. 261). In contrast Peter, who has confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, now repeatedly denies even knowing him. Peter is an example of believers who face hostility, rejection, and humiliation for their faith (Williamson, 1983, p. 267). Peter, who later becomes a respected leader of the church, demonstrates that everyone is dependent on Jesus for forgiveness (Hurtado, 1989, p. 252).

#### IV. Crucifixion (Mark 15:16-41)

1. This story is recounted in Matthew 27:33-56, Luke 23:33-49, and John 19:18-37. Mark's Gospel records Jesus quoting Psalm 22 as he hung on the cross (Williamson, 1983, p. 275).

2. Mark's Gospel tells the stories of Jesus being offered contaminated wine, having his clothes divided among the soldiers, and having two "outlaws" (vs. 27)

hang on either side of him, yet the emphasis of this passage is on the mockery and ridicule he suffers (Hurtado, 1989, p. 265). The soldiers dress him in a purple robe, make him wear a crown of thorns, place a note above his head on the cross that reads, “King of the Jews,” and bystanders insult him (vs.26). For three hours the earth goes dark, and Jesus cries out in desperation for God. The curtain of the synagogue is torn in two. The Roman centurion standing at the foot of the cross acknowledges that Jesus surely was the Son of God.

3. This story is important because:

- a. The writer of this Gospel presents the crucifixion of Jesus as a contradiction: the suffering Messianic King is coronated by torture and death (Williamson, 1983, p. 278). Jesus’ powerlessness is emphasized, yet so is the confidence in God’s saving power (Perkins, 1995, p. 722, 724).
- b. The temple curtain tearing apart symbolizes the new connection to God that we as Christians have through Jesus (NISB, 2003, p. 1842). There are no barriers between us.
- c. While disciples have fled and bystanders mock, it is a Roman centurion who is the first human to declare that Jesus is the Son of God (Bibleproject.com, n.d., 03:42; NISB, 2003, p. 1801). By placing the centurion’s confession at the end of this Gospel, Mark suggests that the entire story of Jesus, through the crucifixion, must be heard and understood before we know what it means to confess that Jesus truly is the Son of God (Perkins, 1995, p. 724).

L. Resurrection (Mark 16:1-9)

1. The story of Jesus' resurrection is also told in Matthew 28:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, and John 20:1-18.
2. When Sabbath is over Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James bring spices to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. When they arrive, they see that the huge stone that had sealed the entrance to the tomb has been rolled away. A young man in a white robe sits to the right side of the tomb and tells them that Jesus is no longer entombed but has risen. The women are told to tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus goes ahead of them to Galilee and will meet them there. The women, frightened, run away and do not say anything to anyone about what they have seen.
3. This story is important because:
  - a. The women came to anoint Jesus' body, meaning that they did not expect him to be raised from the dead, just as we sometimes doubt what God tells us (Hurtado, 1989, p. 281).
  - b. The resurrection is the total reversal of had appeared to be the rejection and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Williamson, 1983, p. 284).
  - c. The women, in contrast to the leper who was told to remain silent yet spoke of Jesus (1:44-45), are commanded to speak out but remain silent out of fear (NISB, 2003, p. 1844). These are women who have been with Jesus, heard him talk about his resurrection, yet still do not believe. How much more afraid or reluctant would we be, who have never seen Jesus? The important point of Mark's Gospel is demonstrated – have faith and trust, because Jesus goes before us.
  - d. In the instructions the women are given, Jesus shows that he has clearly forgiven the disciples their abandonment and denial and has given them a new

beginning – a beginning made possible through the resurrection (Williamson, 1983, p. 284).

M. An alternate ending (Mark 16:9-20)

1. Sometime in the second, third century, or fourth century additional text was added to the Gospel of Mark, composed of a mixture of portions of the other three gospels and from the Book of Acts (HC, 1993, p. 1951; NISB, 2003, p. 1844). It was not part of the original text of Mark (Hurtado, 1983, p. 287).

2. This longer version of Mark's Gospel includes stories of Jesus' appearances to Mary Magdalene and to two disciples walking on a road. This version also recounts Jesus' commissioning of the eleven disciples to go into the world and heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the good news to everyone. Following this, Jesus is taken into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God.

3. The different endings of Mark are important because:

a. The uncertainty about the true ending of this Gospel demonstrates how the Word of God has been handed down through time by the actions of people (Hurtado, 1989, p. 288-289).

b. This longer ending connects the disciples to the ongoing work of the church, and shows us that, just like the disciples, we are also supposed to carry Jesus' message into the world (Williamson, 1983, p. 287).

c. In this passage Jesus scolds the disciples for their unbelief, but then entrusts them with his message of salvation (Williamson, 1983, p. 288). The importance of this is that Jesus does not wait for his disciples to be perfect, to feel confident, or

to exhibit any signs of faith – it is in their obedience to his call that faith is born  
(Williamson, 1983, p. 288).

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