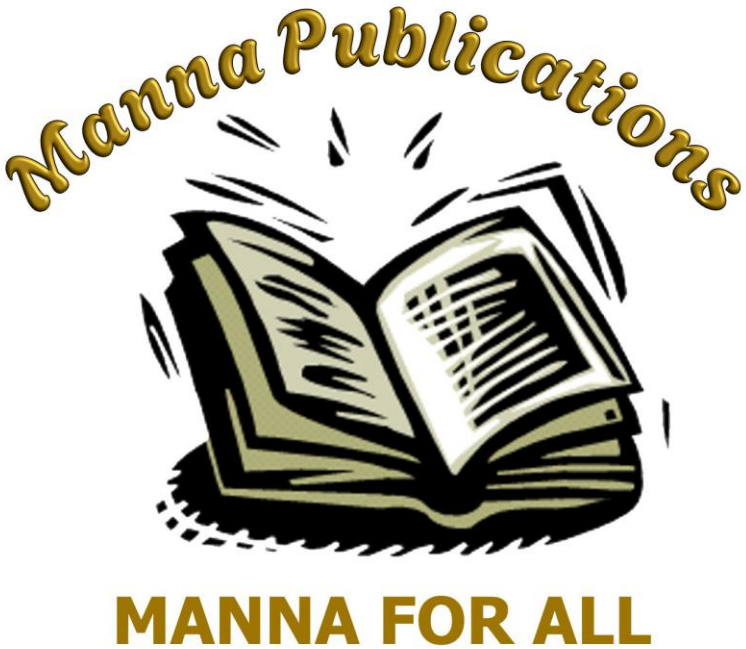
THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK
The early teachings of Jesus Christ

A Bible Teaching Commentary for personal or group study

Written by Fred Morris



Mark Part 1
Chapters 1 to 8

THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK, Part 1
Chapters 1 to 8: The Early Teachings of Jesus Christ

• **The Baptism of Jesus**	• **The Compassion of Jesus**
• **The Disciples of Jesus**	• **The Parables of Jesus**
• **The Miracles of Jesus**	• **Deliverance from Evil Spirits**

THIS BOOK tells about the early days of the ministry of Jesus on Earth. Mark describes His teachings and His healings. It tells us what it means to be a follower of Jesus today. It builds our faith to do His work. It prepares us for the ministry of sharing the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Israel's Messiah. He came to forgive sins and change lives forever.

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THESE BOOKS will help you to come closer to Almighty God. He is worshipped by millions of Jews and Christians worldwide. These books will also help you to receive salvation and eternal life through God's Son, Jesus the Christ who is Israel's Messiah. They will help you to talk about your faith in God and to pray to Him. They will help to guide you from going the wrong way in life. They will help you to live a life that is pleasing to God through the love and power of His Holy Spirit. This was promised to all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, who suffered death for our sins before returning back to Heaven. These are important teachings for these last days before His return.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. Think about what Jesus taught and suffered 2000 years ago for our eternal salvation and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

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Talk about this: Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.

Think about this: Where you see this, the questions require more time for personal meditation.

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THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK

MARK Part One: Chapters 1-8

INTRODUCTION

The Good News of Jesus told by Mark is usually known as the Gospel of Mark. It is one of four gospels in the Bible about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. These gospels are the first four books of the New Testament part of the Bible.

A young Jewish follower of Jesus named John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. He wrote it several years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mark went with Paul and Barnabas to tell the Good News of Jesus in Turkey. But then he left them and went back home to Jerusalem. Paul did not want to take Mark on his next preaching trip. Instead, Barnabas took Mark with him and they went to Cyprus. Later, Paul and Mark worked together again.

Mark believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Note that Jesus often called Himself the Son of Man. God Himself spoke twice from Heaven to say that

The origins of the Old and New Testaments

The Jewish Hebrew holy books became the Old Testament part of the Christian Bible. The first five teaching books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were given by God to Moses. (God's name in Hebrew is Yahweh.) The latter parts of the Old Testament contain history, prophecy, poetry and books about famous people who walked with God. Many of these books speak clearly of Jesus, the coming Jewish Messiah. (The Hebrew name of Jesus is Yeshua.) The early Christian believers studied these Jewish Old Testament teachings.

When the disciples of Jesus began to preach the Good News of salvation through Christ alone, they remembered the Old Testament writings which mentioned their promised Messiah.

During this early period of the Christian church, three disciples, Matthew, Mark and John, each wrote gospels. They were Jewish believers in Jesus. Luke also wrote the Gospel of Luke. He was not a Jew. He later wrote the history of the early church, the Acts of the Apostles. These and other books and letters became the New Testament part of the Bible during the first century AD.

Christians believe that both the Old and New Testament books are the inspired word of God and for teaching today. They were written in Hebrew and Greek and later translated into Latin, German, English and many other languages.

Jesus was His Son (Mark 1:11; 9:7). The title Son of Man proves that the Son of God lived as a man for 33 years. It also reminded the Jews that an Old Testament prophecy said the Messiah would come as a Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14).

Jesus was born to Mary as a Jew through God's Holy Spirit. He was therefore Son of God. Mary's husband later adopted Him as his legal son so He was also Son of Man. This fulfilled the prophecy that Israel's Messiah would be born from the family line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ruth and Boaz and King David. This family line included Joseph who married Mary. (Matthew 1:1-16).

WHAT DID MARK SAY ABOUT JESUS?

These first eight chapters of the Gospel of Mark tell us about the early part of the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus. The Gospel or Good News means that God loves us and He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. God's plan or purpose was that Jesus took the punishment that we deserve for our sins, so that we can be saved. He is therefore our Saviour if we believe He is God's Son. All people everywhere who worship the Lord God Almighty and who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God's Son can be forgiven and saved from their sins. Paul later wrote, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in

What the Old Testament prophets said about Jesus

And how the promises came true in the New Testament

Here are just a few references by Mark to the fulfilment of OT promises:

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ), the Son of God, our Saviour. (OT: Isaiah 53:12; Jeremiah 23:5. NT: Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:11; Luke 2:11; Hebrews 7:25.)
2. Jesus is the promised healer. (OT: Isaiah 35:5,6; NT: Mark 2:12; 7:35; 8:25.)
3. God promised to send a shepherd to care for His sheep. (OT: Ezekiel 34:23. NT: Mark 6:34.)
4. God promised that a messenger would come to prepare the way for Jesus (OT: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1. NT: Mark 1:2-3.)
5. God spoke from Heaven to bless the ministry of Jesus. (OT: Isaiah 42:1. NT: Mark 1:11.)
6. Jesus moved to the region of Galilee to teach the people. (OT: Isaiah 9:1,2. NT: Matthew 4:13,14, Mark 3:7.)
7. Many of His own people refused to believe that Jesus was God. (OT: Isaiah 6:9-10; 53:3; NT: Mark 4:12; 6:3-4; John 1:11.)

There are nearly 500 references in the New Testament from the Old Testament. In the Gospel of Mark there are over 50 OT references. The whole of the Bible from beginning to end reveals the plans of God and their fulfilment in Jesus the Christ as Israel's Messiah and Saviour of the world.

your heart that God raised Him from death, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). They will have everlasting life with God and Jesus in Heaven.

Mark listened much to Peter speak about Jesus and about what He did. The young Mark watched and believed that Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah. For a very long time, the Jews had been waiting for this great leader and Saviour promised by God.

In this first part of the Gospel of Mark, we read about the work that Jesus did when he had reached the age of 30. This was the age when a Jewish man was allowed to teach as a rabbi (teacher). Jesus came to do the work of God, His Father. He healed the sick (2:1-12). He raised the dead (5:42). He told demon spirits to leave people (5:8-13). He fed the hungry (Mark 8:1-13). These miracles were signs that showed Jesus came from God.

Jesus spent much time in the local synagogues listening to the rabbis. They discussed the Law (Torah) and the Prophets and the other writings we call the Old Testament. At the age of 30, He taught His disciples the same truth from God's word.

Mark wanted us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. The Good News is that God will forgive our sins if we repent and believe in His Son and His sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

The Bible says that all people have sinned (Romans 3:23). We are born full of sin, so God sent His Son to clean us from that sin. The greatest thing that Jesus did was to die for us. We deserve to be punished for our sins. Jesus was

Jesus: fully God and fully man

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God in human form. He is fully God, created by a miracle of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He was fully human, knowing the same feelings we know, but without sin. God chose to come into the world that He made by being born as a baby. Jesus was born as a son to Mary. The Holy Spirit of God planted the seed into the virgin Mary. Jesus was fully God in Heaven and He became fully man when born to Mary. He is called 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man'.

Jesus therefore showed us what God is really like and He told us the truth from God. He knew what is in the heart of God His Father who loves us and was prepared to come to us in human form and suffer and die for us.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words in Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT): 'Though he was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to… When he appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died the death of a criminal on a cross.' God's own Son died as the punishment for our sins. Jesus is the promised Christ or Messiah. He is willing to save from their sins all people who confess and believe that He is the Son of God. He will return one day soon to greet all who believe in Him.

born without sin. He did not deserve to die. But the Bible teaches that Jesus came to die for us, in our place, as punishment for our sins. If we are sorry for our sins and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we can be forgiven and live with Him forever. These things were promised in the Old Testament part of the Bible, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

The name Jesus means Salvation, or Saviour. The Hebrew title for Christ is Messiah, which means the Anointed One or Messenger of God. God is the Lord God Almighty whom both Jews and Christians worship. He is Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ. God sent His Son Jesus as Saviour to the Jews and to the rest of the world.

THE FIRST DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH

Roman armies were in control of Israel when Jesus was born. Caesar Augustus, in Rome, sent the order to his soldiers in Israel telling all the Jews to sign their names on a census list (Luke 2:1). He wanted to count how many Jews lived in Israel. To do this the Jews had to travel to the home town of their parents. This is why Joseph and Mary travelled together from Nazareth to Bethlehem to sign their names on the list.

Mary knew from the angel Gabriel that she was pregnant (Luke 1:26-38). An angel also told Joseph that this baby was a miracle from God (Matthew 1:18-25).

It was while they were in Bethlehem that Jesus was born. Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He was the Son of God from the Holy Spirit. Jesus, therefore, was born without sin in His life.

Local shepherds were told by an angel where to find and worship the baby Jesus. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today, in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11). A vision of angels from God told them of this wonderful miracle. They were praising God saying, "Glory to God in the Highest and peace on Earth!" (2:14). God chose shepherds to be the first to know

The manger in the stable

The baby Jesus was laid in a manger which is an animal feeding trough. At the time of Jesus mangers were made of stone. The local priests would place their new-born lambs in mangers and wrap them in cloth to keep them safe. The lambs were then used as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the people. Bethlehem was famous for its sheep and the sinless lambs it supplied to the Jewish synagogues. When the local shepherds were told of the birth of their promised Messiah, they were told where to go to find "the baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger". (Luke2:11-12) Jesus was the perfect sacrifice to bring us back to God.

about the birth of His Son in Bethlehem. He was their promised Messiah, or Christ.

KING HEROD TRIES TO KILL THE BABY JESUS

At this time, King Herod ruled over Israel, which was controlled by Rome. He was a very cruel king. Three wise men from the East went to Herod. They were probably kings, looking for a new King of the Jews in Israel. They had followed a special star in the sky (Matthew 2:2) and brought gifts with them. King Herod asked the local religious leaders to tell him where to find the new king. They read what the prophet Micah said in the Old Testament. The Jewish Christ or Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). "The Lord says that out of you will come a ruler over Israel for Me."

The men from the East found the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. But Herod did not want a Jew to become king in his place. So he killed all the babies in Bethlehem who were under two years old (Matthew 2:16). In this way he hoped to destroy the baby Jesus, God's promised Messiah.

An angel told Mary and Joseph to escape to Egypt with the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:13). They took with them the valuable gifts given to them by the three men from the East. The angel of God later guided them back to Nazareth (Matthew 2:22,23). This was the town of Joseph and Mary where Jesus lived as a carpenter until He was 30 years old. People who lived there thought He was the son of Joseph.

Jesus, our persecuted Saviour, worshipped by shepherds and kings

The prophet Micah was told by God, "Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are certainly not the least important among the towns of Judah. A ruler will come out of you, He will be the shepherd of [will feed, KJV] My people Israel." (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6).

In Bethlehem, Mary was rejected for being pregnant before marriage. She was told by the inn keeper there was no room and to have her baby in a stable. Jesus was worshipped by shepherds and kings. However, Mary and Joseph were warned by the Angel Gabriel to escape with Jesus from King Herod to Egypt. Two years later they returned to Nazareth for Jesus to grow up as a carpenter's son. He worked there and discussed the Torah teachings in the local synagogue until the age of thirty. He was persecuted at birth. And in His final three years of teaching and healing ministry He was persecuted by those who refused to believe He was the Son of God. He is the resurrected Saviour of God's people Israel and of all who believe in Him. He will return one day soon to reign over His Father's Kingdom.

Talk about this:

1. What did the following people think about the birth of Jesus: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds in Bethlehem, King Herod, the three wise men from the East?
2. How many ways did Satan try to destroy God's Son? How did God act to protect His Son?

Think about this: What do you think about the birth of Jesus? Who do you believe Jesus is?

Bible reading: Mark 1:1-20

JOHN THE BAPTISER PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS

In the first 13 verses of the Gospel of Mark, we read about:

- John the Baptist or Baptiser, the last of the Old Testament Prophets (1:4).
- Jesus, the Son of God, who came from Heaven (1:9).
- God, the Holy Spirit, who came upon Jesus and guided Him (1:10,12).
- God, the Father, who spoke from heaven in love for His Son (1:11).
- Satan, who came to tempt and test Jesus (1:13).
- The angels who helped Jesus (1:13).

The book of Luke also tells us more about John the Baptiser. He was born six months earlier than Jesus to Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary (Luke 1:5-24; 57-66). His birth was also a miracle of God because his mother was too old to have babies (1:7,13). But he was not conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was the son of Zechariah. Mark tells us all about the plan of God for John.

John the Baptiser dressed like an Old Testament prophet of God. He lived like Elijah and spoke messages from God (Mark 1:6). He fulfilled the prophecies that Malachi and Isaiah gave 400 and 700 years before the birth of Jesus. They spoke about hearing the voice of a messenger calling "Prepare the way for the Lord!" (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3).

Mark used the words of Isaiah to tell us about John (Mark 1:2,3). John was the messenger sent by the Lord God Almighty to prepare the way for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptiser was not a disciple of Jesus. There was another man called John who became a disciple of Jesus.

God filled John the Baptiser with His Holy Spirit even before he was born (Luke 1:41). John came to warn people not to keep on sinning. He prepared the way for Jesus their Messiah. 'John baptised people in the desert. He preached that people should be baptised and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them' (Mark 1:4-5). Baptism in water was used by the Jewish priests for cleansing and repentance.

When people said that they were sorry for the wrong things they had done, John baptised them. This showed everyone that they had repented. To repent

Baptism: Elijah, John and Jesus

At the time of John the Baptiser, Israel waited for the promised Messiah, the Anointed One of God. For 400 years there was no word from God through His prophets. The people believed that Elijah would come back to prepare the way for Messiah. The prophet Malachi promised this (Malachi 4:5). So the people believed the Old Testament that someone would come to prepare the way for God's Messiah. There was much excitement in Israel when John lived in the desert. He ate simple food. John did not preach in Jerusalem. The people went to listen to him near the River Jordan. John told them that they should repent and be baptised as adults. John was the promised messenger for the promised Messiah in the likeness of Elijah. He knew that Jesus would save Israel and the world from sin if they believed He is the Son of God. It was a Jewish custom to be baptised and be made clean in order to worship God and to prepare for their coming Messiah. Baptism was also the way that Jews welcomed Gentile believers into the family of Abraham.

means that we are sorry for our sins. It means that we want to turn from our sins and obey God. Our sins are everything wrong that we think, say or do or fail to do. We also sin when we fail to obey God and fail to do the good things that He wants. Sin separates us from God. Baptism is a way of showing that God has washed away our old sinful lives and we are making a fresh, clean start with Him.

God had promised to deliver the people of Israel from their enemies and to bless them again. God had promised to send a Saviour, or Messiah. Many prophets in the Old Testament spoke of this. For 400 years there was no special prophet from God. Then John the Baptiser came. He prepared the way for Jesus and His followers.

All the people from Jerusalem and the region of Judea came to listen to him. They knew that the prophet John was not the Messiah. John prepared the way for Jesus. He said that someone very important was coming. "I will baptise you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (1:7,8).

JOHN BAPTISES JESUS

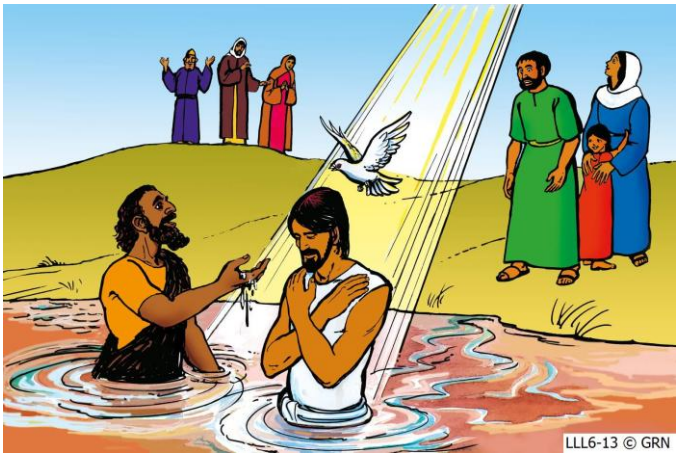
Jesus came from Galilee to the River Jordan and John baptised Him (1:9; Matthew 3:13; John 1:32-34). Jesus did not have to repent, for He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). John baptised Jesus because it was the right thing to do (Matthew 3:15). It was the plan of God and it was right to show this to others. It marked the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

John came to prepare the way for the work of Jesus. When Jesus came up out of the water, John heard and saw three great miracles (Mark 1:10-11):

1. Heaven opened up.
2. The Holy Spirit came down gently to rest on Jesus "like a dove".

3. God spoke from Heaven. "This is My Son, and I love Him. I am very pleased with Him."

Jesus, son of Mary, was therefore anointed as Son of God Almighty at His baptism, by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He was at the beginning of time with His Father God and will be at the end of time. Christians believe in one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is why our God is



John baptises Jesus in water. (The bird was a sign of the Holy Spirit.)

The temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:3-9

- First, Satan tried to make Jesus doubt Himself. "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man does not live on bread only. He lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
- Then Satan tempted Jesus to jump off the Temple and let God's angels save Him. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
- Finally, Satan tempted Jesus to accept an earthly kingdom instead of the Kingdom of God. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13: "Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve."

We must never forget that Jesus, the Son of God, came to live on Earth as a human being. He was tempted, in the same way as us:

- We are tempted to deny our faith in the Lord God Almighty.
- We are tempted to do things in our own strength.
- We are tempted to want the things of this world.

Jesus used His knowledge of the Old Testament against Satan. This is a good example to us all. Satan also knew and quoted the Old Testament, but he used it in the wrong way. We must not listen to people who use the Bible for their own purpose. This is why we should read the whole Bible and know it well.

Satan tempts believers when we are weak and when we are strong. Satan tempted Jesus because he knew that Jesus had Holy Spirit power to make bread from stones, to be safe from jumping off the Temple and to be a king on Earth to do whatever He wanted. But Jesus also knew that His Father wanted Him to live and suffer and die as a human being to save sinners. This is why He sacrificed His power and authority to do the Father's will.

called the Holy Trinity. Trinity means three in one.

John knew and believed that Jesus was the Son of God. John said that Jesus "will baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (1:8).

When John baptised Jesus (1:9) there was no need for Jesus to confess His sins for Jesus was born without sin and had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was and is the Son of God (Mark 1:1). As He came out of the water, Jesus was filled by the Holy Spirit (1:10-11).

After the baptism of Jesus, He was sent away by the Holy Spirit to be tested by Satan for 40 days (1:13; Matthew 4:3-9.) This was important because Jesus was fully God but also fully man. The testing and ministry of Jesus as Christ and Messiah began at His baptism.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS

John the Baptiser called the Jews to repent and believe in Jesus their Messiah. People repent when they are sorry for their sins and turn away from them.

For hundreds of years, the Jewish people had looked for their Messiah. The people wanted a leader who would save them from the power of their enemies. But God wanted the people to turn back to Him so He could save them from their sins, not from the Romans who occupied Israel.

The Old Testament tells us that many messengers of God had been killed when they warned the Jews to repent. The Jewish prophets also told of God's Anointed One or Messiah who would come and save them. This Saviour would come to save all peoples, the Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). This Saviour was the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, or Christ. He is our Saviour today.

John was persecuted by the religious leaders. When John was put in prison, Jesus started to preach in Galilee (1:14). This is a region of Israel to the north of Jerusalem. Jesus gave these reasons to preach the Good News of salvation from God. "The time has come [fulfilled, KJV]" he said. "The Kingdom of God is near. Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News" (1:15).

Names that Mark gave to Jesus

- Jesus the Christ or Messiah (1:1; 8:29)
- Son of God (1:1; 3:11; 5:7)
- Lord (1:3; 2:28; 7:28)
- Son of Man (2:28 and 8:31)

JESUS CALLS TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM

Jesus saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were throwing a fish net into a lake called the Sea of Galilee (1:16). Jesus called to them, "Come and

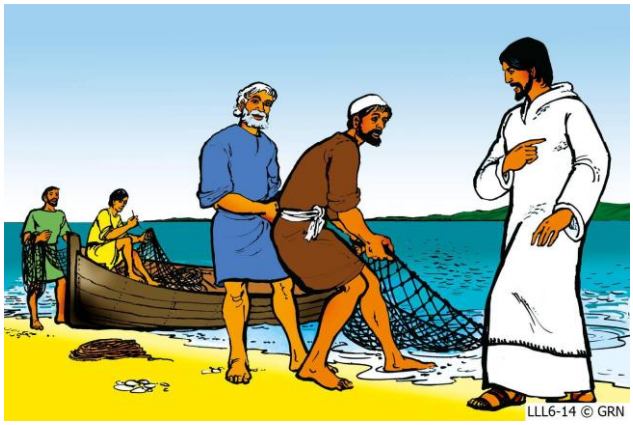
follow Me!" He wanted to teach them about the Kingdom of God from their Old Testament writings. Note that Jesus called ordinary working men to follow him.

At once the fishermen stopped fishing and followed Jesus. It is important to accept the call of Jesus immediately and to follow Him in faith. He gave these men a promise. "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men" (1:17). They would bring people to Jesus to save them from their sins. They would catch men and women, instead of fish, for the Kingdom of God.

Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptiser. He left John and followed Jesus.

Simon believed Jesus was the Messiah, and became one of His closest disciples. Later on, Jesus said to Simon, "Your name will be Peter." It means a rock (John 1:42).

Jesus also called Philip to follow Him. Philip then asked Nathanael to meet Jesus. These men also became disciples of Jesus (John 1:43-48).



Jesus calls His first disciples to follow Him.

Nathanael said to Jesus, "You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Jesus then confirmed who He was by speaking about the angels of God (John 1:51). Only the Son of God could know the angels of God personally.

There were 12 Jewish disciples who gave up everything to follow Jesus. Most of them were young men.

Jesus was now ready to teach His disciples. He also taught others who wanted to listen to the Good News. He taught them about the Kingdom of God and about the plan of His heavenly Father to save sinners.

Talk about this:

1. What did John the Baptiser come to do (1:4,8)?
2. What did John ask people before he baptised them (1:4)? What does it mean to repent?
3. What did God the Father say about Jesus (1:11)?
4. How did Satan try to spoil the plan of God for Jesus (1:13)?
5. What three reasons did Jesus give for preaching the Good News of God's salvation plan (1:15)?
6. What truths does Mark tell us about Jesus in 1:1,7,8,11?
7. What type of people did Jesus choose for His disciples (1:16-20)?
8. What did Jesus mean, "I will make you fishers of men" (1:17)?

Think about this: How can we be like John and prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus today? How can I prepare others for the Kingdom of God? What does it mean for me to be a disciple of Jesus today (1:17-20)?

Bible reading: Mark 1:21-45

JESUS BEGINS TO TEACH AND TO HEAL

Jesus went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum and taught the people (1:21). A synagogue is a Jewish religious meeting place. Their leaders read the Law of Moses to the people every Sabbath day. 'Then Jesus began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching [doctrine, KJV]. He taught them as one who had authority' (1:21-22). He had spent much time in the local synagogue in Nazareth discussing the Scriptures when he was a young man.

Satan could not destroy the Word of God but he made it difficult for Jesus to teach and to preach. The words of Jesus had so much power in them that they made a man cry out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are. You are the Holy One of God" (1:24).

The man had an evil spirit in him, which made him speak in fear like this. Jesus knew that it was the evil spirit controlling him. Jesus told the spirit, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon spirit shook the man and came out of him with a scream. The people were amazed. They said, "He gives orders to evil spirits and they obey Him" (1:27).

'News about Jesus spread quickly all over Galilee' (1:28).

PETER INVITES JESUS HOME

Capernaum was a town on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed there, at the house of Simon who became known as Peter. The mother of Peter's wife was sick. Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her to get up. Her fever left her immediately and she began to serve them (1:31). Jesus had the power of God in Him to do many miracles. He also healed the sick and cast out demons.

By the end of the day all the people in the city knew what had happened. They crowded around the door of the house of Peter (1:33). They brought sick people and those who had demon spirits to Jesus. Jesus healed them all. But He would not allow the demons to speak. He did not want demons to say who He was (1:34).

The ministry of Jesus was so popular that it was difficult for Him to teach. Early next morning He got up and left the house. It was still dark. He went to a place where He could be alone to pray (1:35).

Peter called the others and they went out to look for Jesus. He often got up early to pray while it was still dark. He talked to His Father in Heaven. Prayer

kept Him in the power and will of God. It is important for us all to set aside a time for prayer in a quiet place. It is important to receive the guidance of our Lord God Almighty.

Peter found Jesus and told Him, "Everyone is looking for You" (1:37).

It was difficult for Jesus to teach the people because they wanted to see more miracles. Jesus replied, "Let us go to the nearby villages." Jesus did not let His success in one place stop Him from preaching elsewhere. He did not feel guilty about moving away to preach the Good News from God somewhere else. He said, "That is why I have come" (1:38).

The early ministry of Jesus

There were five stages to the ministry of Jesus:

- Preaching (v.14)
- Teaching (v.21)
- Casting out demons (v.27)
- Healing (v.31)
- Withdrawing to pray (v.35).

There were six outcomes to the ministry of Jesus:

- He gained believers and followers (v.18).
- The crowds were amazed at the teaching (v.22).
- They were amazed at His miracles (v.27).
- News about Him spread near and far (v.28).
- People brought the sick for healing (v.32).
- He was guided to move on from place to place (v.38).

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY

So Jesus and His disciples walked through all the region of Galilee. 'He preached in their synagogues. He also drove out demons' (1:39).

Jesus continued to heal sick people. A man who was sick with leprosy came to Him. It was a bad skin disease. He knelt down and begged Jesus to make his skin clean. People with leprosy had to live away from towns and villages. They were not allowed to touch anyone.

The man said, "If you are willing to make me clean, you can do it" (1:40).

Jesus was very sad for him. He put out His hand and touched him. He said, "I am willing. Be clean" (1:41). At once the man was healed. His skin became clean (1:42).

Then Jesus told him not to tell anyone. "Go and show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded" (1:44). The man had to do this to show that he was healed. It was a teaching from the Old Testament (Leviticus 14:1-32). After that, he could go back to his family. He did not have to live

alone any more. He no longer needed to shout out, "Unclean! Unclean!" when people came near.

The man told everyone he met how he was healed. Soon, it was difficult for Jesus to travel from place to place because of the crowds (1:45). They even followed Him into the desert.

Talk about this:

1. Why were the people surprised at the teaching of Jesus (1:22)?
2. What happened when evil spirits met Jesus (1:23-28)?
3. Why is it important to stop Satan and his demons from speaking out (1:34)?
4. Why did Jesus pray early in the day? Why is it important to find a quiet time and place to pray (1:35)?
5. Why did the man who was healed have to show himself to the priest (1:44)?
6. Why did Jesus move on to another place? Where did He preach? (1:38,39)?

Think about this: What were the main parts to the ministry of Jesus (1:14-15,21,25,31)? What were the results of the ministry of Jesus (1:17,22,27-28,34)? Have you asked God to show you your own ministry of Jesus? Do you make time to pray as Jesus did?

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 2

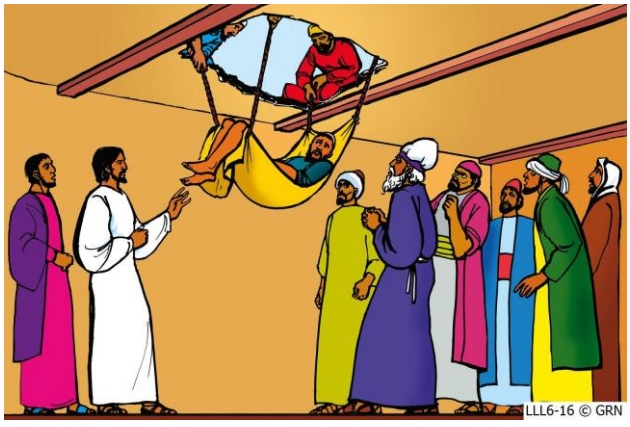
JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO COULD NOT WALK

Jesus went back to Capernaum in the Galilee region. Capernaum was a friendly town for Jesus at this time. Many people heard that He was there. They filled the house where He was teaching until there was no more room (2:2).

Jesus preached the truth from God to them because He Himself was the Word of God. He brought the truth from God to the world. He brought the Good News or Gospel of the love of God shown in Himself.

Houses in Israel were usually built with large stones. Some had flat roofs made of wood and dried mud or clay. You could walk on them. Some of the buildings had very simple roofs made of tree branches.

Four men carried their friend to the house where Jesus was teaching. He could not walk. They could not get inside, so they took the lame man up and removed part of the roof. Then they lowered their friend down on his mat to the feet of Jesus.



Jesus and the lame man on his mat

Faith in God often leads people to do brave things. People who have faith do great things because they are trusting in a great God. Jesus saw the faith of these four men. So He said to the lame man, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5).

Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses heard what Jesus said. They complained, "Only God can forgive sins" (2:7). At that time Jews stoned people to death if they spoke against God (Leviticus 24:16). They did not understand the truth about Jesus and that God Almighty had sent Him into the world.

Jesus knew what they were thinking (2:8). So He said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" (2:9). He said this to show that He was Son of God as well as Son of Man. He had power and authority from heaven on Earth to forgive sins (2:10). In Heaven, He is equal with the Lord God Almighty. God forgives sins in the name of His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of faith in Jesus. If we invite Him into our lives, we receive His power, love and authority as well.

Then Jesus healed the man. He said, "Get up. Take your mat and go home" (2:11).

Everyone watched the man get up and go home. They praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (2:12).

JESUS MAKES FRIENDS WITH SINNERS

Then Jesus went out and spoke to the crowd beside the Sea of Galilee. He wanted to find more men who would leave everything and follow Him. On this day He found Levi, a Jewish taxman, who was also called Matthew. Taxmen worked for the Roman government. The people did not like them because often they were not honest. They collected taxes from the Jews and charged them too much money. However, Levi left his tax job and followed Jesus (2:14).

Levi invited Jesus and the other disciples to eat at his house. Some Jewish teachers of the Law who were Pharisees were there. They asked, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard them and said to them, "Those who are healthy do not need a doctor. People who are ill do need a doctor. I have not come to call those who think they are right with God to follow Me. I have come to call sinners to follow Me [repentance, KJV]" (2:17). This is still the ministry of Jesus today. We are all sinners who need to follow Jesus. Jesus came to reach those who are not right with God.

Jesus wanted to help the people who needed the most help. He wanted to heal their souls as well as their bodies. These people welcomed Jesus but some of the religious leaders did not want to follow Jesus. They were looking for the Messiah but they did not want Jesus. This is why Jesus chose to work with

people who would listen to Him. The hearts of many of the religious leaders were hard and their minds were closed.

JESUS SHOWS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS

The Pharisees thought that they were good people. They fasted, that is, they did not eat food for a time or on certain days of the week. They tried to obey all of the Law of God. But sadly they made laws of their own. God warns that all people are sinners. "There is no-one who does good, no-one at all" (Psalm 53:3). The apostle Paul repeats these same words. "No-one is right with God" (Romans 3:23).

The disciples of John were also fasting (Mark 2:18). The Jews fasted for many reasons:

- To show sorrow when someone had died (Psalm 35:13).
- To think more about God and less about food (Nehemiah 1:4).
- To help them keep the laws on special weekly, monthly or annual holy days (Leviticus 23:26-32).
- To spend more time in prayer for something important (Daniel 9:3).

Some people therefore wanted to know why the disciples of Jesus were not fasting (Mark 2:18). Jesus spoke about a Jewish wedding feast. Jewish brides and bridegrooms opened their houses for the guests to come in. The guests visited, ate well and were happy for the bridegroom and the bride. But when the bridegroom dies, they will be sad and stop eating food for that day. He said this because He would be with them for a short time and they would be happy. Later, He would be taken away and they would be sad. That would be the most important time when they could fast (2:20).

Jesus came to show the Jews a better way. Men, not God, had made many of their religious traditions. They wanted to keep their own traditions. Jesus gave them good advice (2:21-22):

1. Do not sew a new patch of cloth onto old cloth. It will tear and make the hole larger.
2. Do not pour new wine into old wineskins. It will burst the skins and be lost.

Jesus meant that some of the Jewish traditions did not mix well with the new life He offered to all people.

Jesus then said that every teacher of the Old Testament Law is like the owner of a house. He will value both old and new treasures within (Matthew 13:52). Jesus wanted people to follow Him. He wanted to save them from trusting only in their religious traditions and treasures. The Holy Spirit will teach the followers of Jesus about these old and new ways. He will teach them what is from God and what is from men. Then the world will see Holy Spirit power at work to the glory of God.

Jesus did not want His followers to forget the laws of God, nor change them, nor add to them. If they did this, they would end up further from the truth of God. He came to fulfil what God's Law and the Prophets say. This is why it is important to give our lives to Jesus and His teachings. Our faith in the righteousness of God through Christ is sufficient to put us right with God Himself. Alleluia!

JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

One day the Pharisees saw the disciples of Jesus picking and eating corn. It was a Sabbath day, God's seventh day of rest. They said to Jesus, "Look! It is against the Law to do this on the Sabbath. Why are your disciples doing it?" (Mark 2:24) He replied, "The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath" (2:27). The Sabbath was meant as a day of resting, joy and worship. It was not a day of fasting.

Jesus wanted to show mercy on the Sabbath, not sacrifice. He had authority to say this. He was Lord of the Sabbath (2:28).

Jesus reminded the Pharisees what God said in the Old Testament. "I want mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). Jesus told them, "You do not know what these words mean. If you did, you would not bring charges against [condemn, KJV] those who are not guilty" (Matthew 12:7).

Talk about this:

1. What did Jesus know about the thoughts of the religious leaders (2:8)?
2. Why did Jesus forgive the sins of the person who could not walk (2:10)?
3. Why were the religious leaders unhappy when Jesus had a meal with tax collectors (2:16)?
4. Why did Jesus say, "It is not healthy people who need a doctor" (2:17)?
5. What did Jesus teach about fasting (2:19-20)?
6. Why did Jesus teach about new cloth and new wine (2:21-22)?
7. What did Jesus teach about the Sabbath day of rest (2:19-20,27-28)?

Think about this: Why did sinners follow Jesus? Should we make friends with non-believers? Pray to understand the thoughts and needs of people who judge and condemn us.

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 3

JESUS HEALS A MAN ON THE SABBATH

After this, some Pharisees looked for a way to find fault with Jesus (3:2). They watched carefully to see what He would do on the Sabbath day.

One Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue. He saw a man with a weak and twisted hand. He asked the man to stand up in front of everyone. Jesus asked them, "What does the Law say we should do on the Sabbath day?

Should we do good or should we do evil? Should we save life or should we kill?" (3:4).

Jesus became angry because no-one answered Him. He was distressed by the hard hearts of the religious leaders. He was also sad for the people nearby who were afraid to answer. He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was healed (3:5). 'Then the Pharisees went out and began to make plans… to kill Jesus' (3:6).

Jesus was kind to the man with the weak and twisted hand. He was angry with the religious leaders because they were stubborn and hardhearted. He knew that it was right to do good things on the Sabbath day. It is God's seventh day of rest.

The Sabbath worship

Sabbath means rest from work. God made the heavens and the Earth in six days of work. He called the seventh day a Sabbath day and made it holy (Genesis 2:2-3). Later, God gave laws to Moses. The Sabbath remained a holy day (Exodus 20:8-11). On the Sabbath, men and women rested from work to worship their Creator. Sadly, the Pharisees added their own rules for the Sabbath. They thought more about keeping their own Sabbath rules than they did about obeying the Law of God.

The Sabbath day is therefore a Saturday, the seventh day of the week. After the ascension of Jesus, His followers continued to meet for worship on the Sabbath. They met to study the teachings of the Old Testament and listen to the teachings of Jesus from His apostles. (Acts 2:42). They broke bread and shared wine to obey the instruction of Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:17-20).

In the year 321 AD, Constantine the Great issued an order for all people in the Roman Empire except farmers to rest on Sundays. This order did not stop many believers continuing to meet for worship on Saturdays.

JESUS TEACHES THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee with His followers. Great numbers of people came from near and far away to hear Him (3:7-8). The people were pushing and crushing Jesus, so He stood in a boat on the lake to teach them. Voices can be heard a long way across water.

Jesus healed many people in this region (3:10). He stopped the evil spirits from shouting out that He was the Son of God (3:12). He did not want the unclean spirits to speak about Him. Satan will try to do anything to hinder the witness of Jesus. Jesus came to honour and obey God His Father. He came to save and to serve others.

Later, Jesus went to the hills. He chose twelve of His followers and called them His disciples (3:13-15):

- to follow and trust Him at all times;
- to teach them about the Kingdom of God;
- to send them out to teach and to preach;
- to give them Holy Spirit power to heal and authority to drive out demons.

The twelve disciples included Judas Iscariot who later betrayed Jesus (3:19).

For over three years, Jesus taught the disciples to be messengers of God. He encouraged them to tell the Good News from God that salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught them that it was the plan of God to sacrifice His Son to save sinners.

THE POWER OF GOD OVER SATAN

Again, large crowds gathered to listen to Jesus (3:20). He and His disciples did not have time to eat. The Pharisees grew angry with Jesus and said, "He is driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons" (3:22).

Jesus asked them, "How can Satan drive out Satan?" This did not make sense. Jesus said (3:24-27):

- "If a kingdom fights [is divided, KJV] against itself, it cannot stand."
- "If a family [house, KJV] fights against itself, it cannot stand."
- "If Satan fights against himself … he cannot stand."

Jesus also said that if you take over a house, you must first tie up the strong man who owns the house. Satan is strong, but Jesus is stronger than Satan. Jesus came to bind the strong man and to free his prisoners. Jesus drives out demons. He also came to people bound by sin and by religious traditions, to set them and their homes free (Galatians 3:22-23).

Jesus added, "Evil words against God will be forgiven. But anyone who speaks evil things [blasphemes, KJV] against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven." He said this because the teachers of the Law said that He had an evil spirit (Mark 3:28-30). Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.

JESUS AND HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS

It may surprise you to read that on one occasion Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers (3:31-35). He knew that they wanted to take Him away (3:21). They were worried about the things people were saying about Him in His home town of Nazareth. Some people even thought that Jesus was mad.

Jesus did not want to argue with His family. So He chose not to see them. In this way, they would not delay the plan of God. He wanted to stay with the people who needed Him most. The crowds wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters (3:35). Followers of Jesus become the family of God.

Mark does not say that Jesus turned away from His own mother and brothers. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were fulfilling the will of God. He did the kindest thing and the correct

thing towards His family. He avoided a family argument while doing the will of His heavenly Father.

Sometimes, our relatives make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what the plan or will of God is. We must also understand how to avoid troubles when we make family decisions.

Sometimes Satan uses the love and fears of family members to try to stop the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not feel anger for His family, only love. His family also included the poor and sick people in the world and others who needed Him.

Talk about this:

1. Was it wrong to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath day? What things can we do on the Sabbath?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "The Sabbath day was made for man" (2.27)?
3. Why do some people fast?
4. What does it mean to become disciples of Jesus?
5. How did Jesus show love for His mother and family? How did He avoid family troubles (3:34-35)?

Think about this: How can we honour and worship God on Sabbath days and on Sundays? How do we obey God seven days a week? (3:14-15) How do we show that we are part of a worldwide family of God (3:34-35)? How do we avoid family troubles? How do we avoid Satan hindering our witness?

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 4

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE SEED

Many people followed Jesus so He again sat in a boat to teach (4:1). Jesus taught the people many things using stories of life, called parables (4:2).

In this parable, the farmer or sower means someone who shares the Good News of Jesus. The seed he sows is the truth of the message from God. It is the Gospel or the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ. The person who shares the truth from God sows the seed in the world. He shares the truth about what he has read or heard or seen. A witness who explains this truth is a teacher or messenger.

In the parable, the sower scattered the seed on the ground as far as he could (4:4). Some seed fell on the path and the birds quickly ate it up. Some seed fell on stony ground and the plants grew but did not live long in the hot sun. Some seed fell among weeds and the plants did not grow strong. But some seed fell on good ground. The soil was well prepared. It was open and ready to receive the seed. It produced a good harvest.

This parable is an example of how the Kingdom of God is established in the lives of those who are open to the truth from God. Later, Jesus explained this parable to His disciples (4:13-20). Some people are as hard as the path. Their hearts do not take in the Good News of Jesus. The soil is thin and the weeds are many. There is nowhere for the seed to grow properly. Satan quickly takes away the message that was given to them (4:15). Their hearts are not open nor prepared ready to receive the Word of God.

The parable of the sower

Jesus knew it was important to explain about bad soil as well as good soil:

- Some people have only a little room to take in the message of God. The seed grows quickly in between the rocks and stones. But there is little soil for the seed to grow. People receive the message of God but easily give up when trouble comes (4:16-17). Their faith in God is shallow, not deep.
- Some people have lives full of other things like weeds: worry, love of money and the things that money buys. These all weaken their faith (4:18-19). They love God but they also love other things. Their lives become unfruitful.
- Some people are open and ready to receive the Gospel. Then the Word of God grows and produces a good crop (4:20). The new life of true faith in God produces much good fruit. Hearts that are prepared well will receive and share the truth from God. Their lives will be fruitful.
- When we tell other people the Good News, some will understand. Others will not want to listen or they will refuse to understand.
- Some will quickly follow Jesus but will get discouraged. They will quickly give up because of a weak faith.
- Some will follow Jesus but then go the wrong way in life because they also want to do many other things.

But the people who hear and understand these things will live fruitful lives in the Kingdom of God, as with the seed that fell on good soil (4:20).

Jesus warned the crowds that if they did not understand this parable, then they would not understand the other parables (4:13). This is what Isaiah warned in the Old Testament (4:12; Isaiah 6:9,10). This is why Jesus warned everyone, "Those who have ears should listen" (Mark 4:9).

This parable shows the difference between people who are saved and people who are lost. It shows what happens to people who do not listen carefully to the truth from God. Their hearts are not ready to receive His truth.

They do not let the truth change their lives. Then their faith is not strong when troubles come. But those who are ready to receive the Word of God produce a good harvest at the right time. Their lives produce good things.

MORE PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus asked, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or under a bed? Or do you put it on its stand?" (4:21). Jesus came as a light for the world (John 8:12). His light must be brought into the open (Mark 4:22). This light of Jesus is the truth from God.

Jesus said again, "Everyone who has ears should listen" (4:23). He added, "Think carefully about what you hear" (4:24). We must seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to know what is the truth from God. We must be prepared to reject what non-believers tell us and even walk away from them. We must also test what other believers tell us by reading the written Word of God in the Bible. We must also share with others the understanding from God that we have received. The light of the truth from God will bless others. It brings the gift of wisdom from God. It brings new life on Earth, joy, peace, faith and eternal life in Heaven. Jesus said, "As you give [to others], so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more" (4:24).

However, people who do not listen and do not receive these gifts from God have very little to share. Jesus warned, "If you have nothing, even what you have will be taken away from you" (4:25). So let us listen carefully and understand the things of God. Then let us share what we understand to bless others. If not, we will lose the little understanding we have.

The disciples of Jesus did not understand the things He said about the Kingdom of God. So Jesus used more stories, or parables, to teach them. He taught them what the Kingdom of God is like.

A farmer who sows seed is like a messenger who preaches the Word of God. He digs and prepares the soil. He then throws the seed on the open ground. He believes that the seed grows by itself. He does not know how it happens. He believes that it will produce a harvest with many more seeds (4:26-29).

The growing seed from the messenger of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. It grows in the lives of the people who open their hearts to the truth from God.

A farmer cannot produce the harvest. He prepares the soil so that it is open to receive the seed. He cares for the young plants. Then he waits in faith for the harvest.

Jesus told another parable about the Kingdom of God. It was like a tiny mustard seed planted in the ground. In less than a year it grew larger than all the other plants. Its branches were so big that birds could rest in its shade (4:30-32).

The Kingdom of God on Earth began as a very small thing. The first followers of Jesus were not important people. They were ordinary men and

women who went out preaching the Word of God. During their lifetime, the Kingdom of God spread across Europe, Asia and Africa, just as Jesus promised (Acts 1:8).

Jesus told many parables to help the people understand what would happen (Mark 4:33). Men and women either reject the truth of God or believe it and become followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces more seeds and the people of God bring in the harvest.

When Jesus was alone with His disciples, He explained everything to them (4:34). The Kingdom of God needs teachers as well as preachers. It also needs workers who will prepare the ground, sow the seed and bring in the harvest. This is all a work of the Holy Spirit using the God-given gifts and experience of true believers (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35-38). Once we have heard and obeyed God's truth in Jesus, we must seek guidance do acts of faith with the love of Christ and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE DISCIPLES CROSS THE LAKE DURING A STORM

Jesus asked the disciples to go with Him to the other side of the lake called the Sea of Galilee. While they were crossing the lake, a storm started. Waves covered their small boat (4:35-37).

The disciples were afraid. Jesus was asleep. They woke Him. "Teacher, do You not care if we drown?" (4:38). Jesus got up and ordered the wind to stop. Then He said to the waves, "Be still!" The wind stopped and the lake immediately became calm (4:39). Normally, it takes several hours for waves to calm down.

Jesus calms the storm

Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen from the region of Galilee. They had never seen anything like this happen before. They were very afraid. They asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him" (4:41).

Jesus wanted to know why they were so afraid. He asked, "Do you not have any faith at all yet?" (4:40). When our hearts are troubled, Jesus says the same thing to us, "Peace, be still! Calm down!" When troubles come, He is always there with us. He wants us to trust Him even when we are afraid. This gives us His peace which is beyond our understanding (John 14:27).

Jesus calmed the wind, the waves and the disciples.

Talk about this:

1. What did Jesus mean by "Those who have ears should listen" (4:9,23)?
2. What did the Old Testament prophet say about hard hearts (4:12; Isaiah 6:9-10)?
3. What is the purpose of God in the parable of the sower (4:14,20)?
4. What is the purpose of Satan in the parable (4:15-19)?
5. What is good ground (4:8,20,27-29)? How are lives prepared for receiving the truth from God?
6. What is bad ground (4:4-6; 15-19)? How are lives stopped from receiving the truth from God?
7. What can we do to help people understand the truth from God (4:34)?
8. What did Jesus say about the faith of the disciples (4:40)?

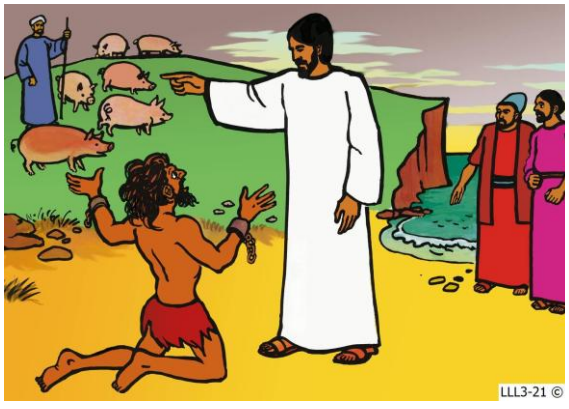
Think about this: Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you how to prepare the ground, to sow and to grow seeds and to bring in a harvest of souls. How much peace and faith do you have in the storms of life (4:40)? Is Jesus with you in your boat?

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 5

JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO A MAN WITH DEMONS

Jesus and His disciples travelled by boat to the region of the Gerasenes (5:1). This was on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. The caves there were used for burying dead people. A man lived in the caves. Evil spirits lived inside him. They were demons that made him violent and angry. The people tried to put him in chains but he broke them. He screamed night and day and cut himself (5:3-5).

The man saw Jesus get out of the boat. He ran up to Jesus and knelt down in front of Him (5:6). The evil spirits knew who Jesus was. The man shouted, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Promise before God that You will not hurt me!" (5:7). Evil spirits know who Jesus is. They know that Jesus has authority over them and they fear Him (James 2:19).



Jesus heals a man with many demons

Jesus ordered the demons to leave the man (5:8). The man begged Jesus not to send them out of the area (5:10).

There was a herd of pigs nearby. The demons asked to go into them (5:11-12). Jesus allowed it. The pigs ran down into the lake and were drowned. There were

about 2000 pigs (5:13). Then the man knew that he was free from all those evil spirits.

The men who looked after the pigs told everyone what had happened. When the people heard this, they went to see for themselves (5:14). They found the man at peace, sitting quietly with Jesus (5:15).

The people were afraid. Before, they were afraid of the man with the demons. Now they were afraid of the power of God. So they begged Jesus to go away (5:17).

The man wanted to go with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus did not let him. He said, "Go home to your family [friends, KJV]. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how He has been kind to you" (5:18-19). Now he could witness to his family what Jesus had done for him.

The man also witnessed to people in the Ten Cities on that side of the Sea of Galilee. They were amazed (5:20). These people were not Jews but gladly they received the Good News of Jesus, Israel's Messiah. After this amazing ministry, Jesus returned to the other side of the lake where the Jews lived (5:21).

Often envy, witchcraft, drugs, alcohol or gambling destroy family life. These things make people cruel. They allow evil spirits to control their lives. Only the power of Jesus Christ can drive these demons out. Evil spirits are not afraid of us. They are afraid of Christ's Holy Spirit power in us. Only Jesus can cast out evil and give a spirit of love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).

This man came freely to Jesus. But he was only truly free when Jesus cast out the demons.

THE FAITH OF A WOMAN AND A SYNAGOGUE LEADER

Jairus was one of the Jewish synagogue leaders. He came to Jesus and knelt at His feet. He begged Jesus, "My little daughter is dying. Please come. Place Your hands on her to heal her. Then she will live" (5:23).

The crowd followed Jesus. A very sick woman also followed Him. She had bled for 12 years. She spent all her money on medicines, but the bleeding got worse. In faith she reached out to Jesus and touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, she was healed. The woman knew that she was healed inside her body (5:25-29).

Jesus turned round and asked, "Who touched My clothes?" He knew that power had gone out from Him (5:30). The woman knelt down at the feet of Jesus. She was shaking with fear but she told Him the truth (5:33).

Jesus said to her, "Dear woman, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. You are free from your suffering" (5:34). No-one had ever spoken words like these to this woman before.

Do you have a sickness? Or has someone hurt you inside? Reach out to Jesus. He is waiting for you to trust Him. Believe that He will take away your pain.

Jairus was still with Jesus. Messengers arrived with bad news. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the Teacher anymore?" Jesus did not listen to them. He told Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Just believe" (5:35-36).

Then Jesus asked Peter, James and John to follow him to the home of Jairus (5:37). He often kept these three men close to Him (9:2).

They met some mourners who were crying loudly. Jesus went inside. He said to them, "Why all this confusion and crying? The child is not dead. She is only sleeping." They laughed at Him (5:38-40).

Jesus made them all go outside. He took the mother and father and the three disciples inside. He took the girl by the hand and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" At once, she stood up and walked around. Everyone was amazed (5:41-42).

Jesus has power to heal people and to give back life. Reach out to Him in faith for all your needs. He has promised to answer your prayers. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus raises a girl from death

Jesus ordered the family not to let anyone know what really happened. Then He told them to give the girl something to eat (Mark 5:43).

Peter, James and John saw and heard what happened. Peter later wrote in one of his letters, "Give all your worries to Him. He cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7). The bleeding woman had faith in Jesus for herself. Jairus had faith in Jesus for his daughter. God blessed their faith and answered their prayers. God wants to bless those who have needs, who are sad and who are willing to ask Him for help (Matthew 5:3-5).

The man with the demons, the bleeding woman and Jairus, believed in Jesus in very different ways. Their faith brought fullness of health in body, mind and spirit.

Talk about this:

1. Describe the faith of the man with demons (5:2-7).
2. What do demons know about Jesus (5:7)?
3. What did the local people see when they went to the caves (5:15)?
4. What did the man want to do (5:18)? What did Jesus want him to do (5:19)? What did he end up doing (5:20)?

5. Describe the faith of Jairus (5:23) and the woman (5:28).
6. What did the disciples learn about the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus (5:30-33; 40-42)? What did they learn about His love for others (5:34,43)?

Think about this: What was the result of the faith of the man with the demons, the woman and Jairus? What can Jesus do to help you, your family and your neighbours?

Bible reading: Mark 6

NO FAITH AT NAZARETH

Jesus went back to Nazareth where He grew up as a carpenter and discussed the Scriptures with the local rabbis (1:9; 6:1). He now taught in the synagogue, the local Jewish meeting house. It was the Sabbath day. Many who heard Him were amazed (6:2). But they did not believe that He was the Messiah, or Christ. They knew that He was the son of the local carpenter. They knew His brothers and sisters (6:3). They could not believe in Him. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Christians may go to many places taking blessing to others. However, they are not always valued in their home town (6:4). Jesus healed only a few people in Nazareth because they had little faith in Him (6:5). He was amazed at their lack of faith (6:6). They even tried to harm Him (Luke 4:29).

The words that Jesus taught at Nazareth

Jesus read a prophecy of Isaiah to the congregation in the synagogue (Luke 4:18). It was written by Isaiah over 700 years earlier: "The Spirit of the Lord and King is upon Me. The Lord God Almighty has anointed Me to tell the Good News to poor people and comfort those whose hearts have been broken" (Isaiah 61:1). After reading these words, Jesus said, "This scripture comes true as you listen" (Luke 4:21)

May we all find these words come true as we teach the Good News of God about Jesus, His Son, our Saviour. Be prepared for people to reject the truth from God. Rejoice when some are open to the truth that sets them free!

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus left Nazareth and went to other villages in Galilee. His time on Earth would soon end. Many places had not heard the Good News. So He sent the disciples out to preach it to others and to extend the Kingdom of God. 'He sent them ahead to … every town and place He was going to visit' (Luke 10:1). Jesus gave them power over evil spirits (Mark 6:7) and to heal all diseases (Luke 9:2). Notice that they did not go alone, they went in twos.

Notice also that He said to them, "Take no bread, no bag and no money in your belts." They were doing this work for God so they did not need to worry about food or money or extra clothes (Mark 6:8-9). They could trust in God for their needs but not stay where they were unwelcome (6:11).

The same power that was in the disciples is in all believers today. 'The disciples went out to teach what Jesus taught them. They preached that people should turn away from their sins. They drove out many demons. They poured olive oil on many people who were ill and healed them' (6:12-13). They reached out in the power and name of Jesus and with His authority (6:7). Later, He sent out 72 more men to prepare the way for His ministry (Luke 10:1)

HOW HEROD CAUSED THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTISER

Another King Herod ruled in Galilee at this time. He was not a friend of the Jews. He was a friend of the Romans. He was called King because he was governor of a large part of Israel (Matthew 14:1). His wife tricked him to kill John the Baptiser.

Herod heard that Jesus healed sick people and drove out demons. He also heard that some people believed God had raised John the Baptiser from the dead. Others said, "He is Elijah" (Mark 6:15). Many thought he was one of the prophets of God from long ago.

This troubled Herod. He put John in prison for preaching to him. John told Herod that it was wrong for him to marry the wife of his brother (6:16-18).

The new wife of Herod hated John and wanted to kill him. Herod put him in a safe place in prison. He liked to listen to John (6:20), but Herod made a foolish promise to her daughter at his birthday party. He boasted, "Anything you ask for I will give to you" (6:23). Her mother told her to ask for the head of John the Baptiser (6:24). Sadly he sent the order to kill John. He was afraid to break his promise in front of important guests (6:26).

Later, Herod wanted to kill Jesus, too. Jesus said, "Tell that fox [Herod] … I must keep going" (Luke 13:32-33). Jesus knew that this evil man could not stop the plan of His Father to save people from their sins. It was the plan of God for His Son to go to Jerusalem at the right time. There He would die for sinners in the way that God had always planned.

JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE

The disciples returned to Jesus. They told him all they had done and taught (Mark 6:30). Jesus could not eat with His disciples because so many people were coming and going (6:31). He said, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place. You need to get some rest." So they got into a boat and went along the lake (6:32).

People saw them leaving and they ran ahead. They hoped that they would find Jesus (6:33).

Jesus was sorry for them. 'They were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things' (6:34). But the disciples said to Jesus, "It is already very late. Send the people away. They can go and buy something to eat" (6:35-36).

Jesus told the disciples, "You give them something to eat." Their first thought was the cost of the food. Philip said that they did not have enough money to buy food. Andrew said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves of bread. He also has two small fish. But how far will that go in such a large crowd?" (John 6:7-8).

Jesus told the people to sit down. 'He took the five loaves and two fish. He looked up to Heaven and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread into pieces. Then He gave them to His disciples to give to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all' (Mark 6:41).

'All of them ate and were satisfied [filled, KJV]. The disciples picked up 12 baskets of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of men who ate was 5000', not counting some women and children (6:42-44). They were all amazed.

Jesus feeds 5000 people

Notice how Jesus used the disciples to work this miracle. Christians often complain that the job is too big. But God has given us all that we need through the power of His Spirit. God uses the little we have to work His miracles. But if we do not use what we have, we cannot see Him at work.

Jesus sent the disciples away in a boat. Then He sent the crowds away. He went up the mountain to pray (6:45-46).

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Jesus saw the disciples rowing the boat against the wind. They were in the middle of the lake called the Sea of Galilee. Early in the morning, He went to them. He walked on the lake (6:47-48). They saw Him and thought He was a ghost. They were afraid and shouted out (6:49).

At once Jesus said to them, "Be brave! It is Me. Do not be afraid" (6:50). He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely amazed (6:51).

The disciples still did not have much faith. They followed Jesus and saw miracles. But they did not understand about the loaves and fish. They were

also stubborn (6:52). They were also afraid when He walked on water. However, with Jesus in their boat, they found peace.

As soon as Jesus and His disciples landed at Gennesaret, the crowds ran to Him. They carried sick people on mats. Everywhere He went, all who touched Him were healed (6:53-56).

Talk about this:

1. Why could Jesus not do many miracles in Nazareth (6:4-5)?
2. Why did Jesus send the disciples out (6:7,12-13; Luke 9:1; 10:1)?
3. Describe the teaching and preaching ministry of the disciples. Also, describe the miracles they performed through the Holy Spirit power given to them by Jesus.
4. What power and authority do we have when we talk to others about Jesus (6:10-13)?
5. What should we do when the work of God is too big for us (6:37-42)? How does faith grow?
6. What did the disciples need to learn about Jesus (6:50-52)?

Think about this: When needs are great, do you give up? Do you hope that the problems will go away? Or do you do what little you can so that Jesus can perform miracles through you? Is the extension of the Kingdom of God part of the work of your church today?

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 7

THE TEACHINGS OF THE JEWISH LEADERS

The Jews always washed their hands before they ate food. Many washed them in a special way. One day, the religious leaders saw that the disciples of Jesus ate food without washing their hands (7:2). So the teachers of the law questioned Jesus. "Why do they eat their food with unclean hands?" (7:5.)

He replied, "Isaiah was right. He prophesied about you people [hypocrites, KJV] who pretend to be good." Isaiah the prophet said that these teachers honour God by what they say but their hearts are far from Him. They teach only human rules (7:6-7; Isaiah 29:13).

Jesus told the teachers, "You keep the teachings [traditions, KJV] that men have made" (Mark 7:8). Then He gave an example. These teachers told people to give money to God instead of using it to help their aged parents. They were not obeying the commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:12). Jesus told them, "You make the word of God useless by putting your own teachings in its place. You do many things like that" (Mark 7:13).

Washing hands in a special way before they ate food was one of the Jewish traditions. But Jesus told them, "It is what comes out of you that makes you unclean" (7:15). They taught the truth of God but their hearts were

unchanged. We must not let our traditions hinder the truth of God. Faith in God's word is life-changing.

These Jewish teachers from Jerusalem looked good on the outside but God wants us to be good on the inside. It is the things we think and do and say which are important to God. God knows our thoughts.

Later, Jesus told the disciples that evil thoughts come from our hearts. "Sexual sins, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, cheating, come from the heart. So do telling lies about others and being proud and being foolish. All these evil things come from inside a person. They make a person unclean" (7:21-23).

A FOREIGN WOMAN SHOWS FAITH IN JESUS

Jesus left that place and walked 60 km to Tyre (7:24). Tyre and Sidon were very old cities on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The people who lived there were not Jews. They worshipped gods or idols.

Jesus did not want people to know where or who He was. But even in this place, the people knew about Him.

A woman saw Jesus and recognised Him. She knelt down at His feet. She wanted Jesus to heal her daughter. An evil spirit controlled her little girl (7:25). 'She begged Jesus to drive out the demon from her daughter' (7:26).

Jesus told her, "It is not right to take the bread from the children and throw it to dogs" (7:27). Jesus meant that he had come to teach the truth of the Kingdom of God to the Jews first. Jesus told His disciples to do this (Matthew 10:6). Their time to teach those who were not Jews would come later (Mark 16:15).

The woman knew what Jesus meant. She knew that Jesus was testing her faith. She was bold and strong in her faith. She answered, "Yes Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs that the children leave" (7:28).

Jesus was very pleased with her answer. He told her, "That was a good reply. You may go now. The demon has left your daughter" (7:29). She went home and the demon was gone (7:30).

The Kingdom of God is for all people including foreigners. Jesus accepts anyone who confesses his or her sins, repents and follows Him. He later warned those who did not repent. He said that it would be easier for the people of Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day (Matthew 11:20-22).

Isaiah, 740 years before the ministry of Jesus, prophesied that God's Messiah would "bring the family of Jacob (Israel) back to Him … make the people a light for other nations … and make it possible for the whole world to be saved" (Isaiah 49:5-6).

JESUS HEALS A DEAF AND DUMB MAN

From Tyre, Jesus travelled back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The people who lived there also were not Jews. He continued to perform miracles among these non-Jews. Jesus healed a man who was deaf and could not speak very well.

The man was healed because the people brought him to Jesus with faith. 'They begged Jesus to place His hand on the man' (7:31-35). He put His fingers in the ears of the man. He touched the tongue of the man. The man was healed. The people were amazed.

Talk about this:

1. Are the words of Isaiah from the Old Testament still coming true today (Isaiah 29:13; 49:5-6)?
2. What did the woman from Tyre believe about Jesus (7:25,28)?
3. Why did Jesus heal people who did not belong to His country, culture or faith? (7:29)
4. Who helped the deaf and dumb man to be healed (7:33-34)? What did they believe about Jesus?

Think about this: Do you help only people inside the church or outside the church as well? Do you pray for foreigners and for those who do not worship the Lord God Almighty?

Bible reading: Mark Chapter 8

JESUS FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND

Many people listened to Jesus as He spoke (8:1). They had been with Him for three days with nothing to eat. Jesus said, "I feel deep concern for these people… Some have come from far away" (8:2-3). Mark makes it clear to us that Jesus had compassion for the people. Compassion is a firm foundation for ministering to the lost and needy people.

The disciples had seven loaves with them. 'He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and thanked God for them. Then He broke them and gave them to the disciples. They set the loaves down in front of the people' (8:6).

'The disciples also had a few small fish. Jesus thanked God for them too. He told the disciples to share them' (8:7). When we obey Jesus and have faith in Him, He can open the way for a miracle. They obeyed. About 4000 men ate the food and were filled. There were seven baskets of food left over!

After this, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This was on the north-west side of the lake where the Jews lived.

THOSE WITH LITTLE FAITH, NO FAITH OR GREAT FAITH

Some of the religious leaders met Jesus. They were the Pharisees. They came and began to ask Jesus questions. They wanted to test Him. So they asked Him for a miracle, a sign from Heaven (8:11).

Those Pharisees had no faith in Jesus. Their questions made Jesus sad and tired. He sighed deeply. He said, "No sign will be given to you" (8:12). Jesus left them. Mark then begins to record the teachings of Jesus about true discipleship. He and the disciples went into the boat again to go to Bethsaida (8:13). The disciples had forgotten to bring some bread with them (8:14). Jesus warned, "Be careful about the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod" (8:15).

The disciples were confused (8:16-17). Jesus asked them, "Do you have eyes and still do not see? Do you have ears and still do not hear?" (8:18). Jesus used the words of the prophet Ezekiel who lived 600 years earlier. God told Ezekiel, "You are living among people who refuse to obey Me. They have eyes that can see. But they do not really see. They have ears that can hear. But they do not really hear. Therefore, they refuse to obey me" (Ezekiel 12:2).

Jesus did not want faith in Him to be destroyed by the difficult rules of the Pharisees or their unwise king Herod. He wanted his disciples to remember the feeding of the 5000 and 4000 men. He wanted them to have more faith in Him for their food, especially their spiritual food. He said to them, "Can't you understand yet?" (Mark 8:21).

Jesus walked away from the Pharisees who did not want to believe in Him. Instead, He helped His followers who wanted to understand the truth.

In Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus. They asked Jesus to touch and to heal him (8:22).

Jesus took the man outside the village. The healing was in two stages. The man could not see clearly at first. 'Once more Jesus put His hands on the eyes of the man. Then… he saw everything clearly' (8:25).

Spiritually the disciples were like this blind man. They could not see clearly the things that Jesus taught. They needed more faith to follow what Jesus was saying and doing. They had to learn to obey the Son of God, not follow the traditions or rules of men.

However, after the resurrection of Jesus, the faith of the disciples and the power of the Holy Spirit soon changed the lives of many people in Europe, Africa and Asia. Faith in Jesus is a gift from God that has changed the world one by one.

PETER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST

Jesus and His disciples then went to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. One day, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say I am?" (8:27). He wanted

to know what they really believed. This became the turning point in their teaching and later calling as apostles of Christ.

They answered, "Some say that you are John the Baptiser. Others say Elijah. Still others say you are one of the prophets" (8:28).

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" (8:29).

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (8:29). Peter meant the Messiah, the special king that God had promised Israel, who would become Saviour of the world (Jeremiah 23:5). Jesus had been born to the Virgin Mary as the Son of God, lived in lowly Nazareth, brought up as a carpenter and taught by rabbis. At last the eyes of the disciples were opened to who He really was!

Jesus was pleased with this answer. "This faith was not given to you by man. My Father in Heaven showed it to you" (Matthew 16:17). Their faith in Jesus and their understanding of God's salvation plan would soon prepare them to be witnesses to the rest of the world.

THE WAY OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS

Jesus then told His disciples what would soon happen to Him. He told them that He must suffer many things. He said that the religious leaders would not accept Him. The chief priests and the teachers of the [Old Testament] law would not accept him either [Luke 9:22]. 'He must be killed and after three days rise again' (Mark 8:31). He spoke to them clearly now, not in parables. Soon, He would be taken away by His own people, the Jews and their religious leaders. Many would shout, "Kill Him!"

Peter was very upset about this. He did not want to believe that his Lord and Master would be rejected. He said to Jesus "Never, Lord! This will never happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22.)

Satan used Peter's words to try to stop the death of their Saviour Jesus for the sins of the world. Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan. You are not thinking about the things God cares about" (8:33). Satan had put these words into the mouth of Peter. Satan uses any means to stop or destroy our understanding of God's plan to save men and women from their sins. Peter did not fully understand the plan of God for Jesus to suffer and to die as punishment for our sins. Jesus told him, "You are thinking only about human things."

THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Then Jesus called the people to Him. He said, "If you want to be my disciple, you must put yourself last. You must pick up your cross and follow me" (8:34).

Jesus warned them all that every follower had to take up their own cross. The way of the cross is a way of suffering. Each person must be ready to give

up their own way of life. We must be ready to do the will of God in our lives for the sake of others. That is what Peter needed to do.

For followers of Jesus, His cross is not just a thing of gold or silver on a chain. The cross means death to our old life. We live to serve God. We do only the things that please Him. The cross means dying to our old selves, and then allowing the Holy Spirit to make our lives new.

Jesus gave up His glory and power and came to Earth as a baby to do what the Father wanted. Now He offers His followers a new life and calling. He gave up everything to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus wants His followers to put God first in their lives and to spread the Good News of His salvation plan in the sacrifice of His Son. "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for Me and for the Good News will save it" (Mark 8:35). For many people who have followed Jesus, it has cost them their lives. For some people today, it might also cost them their lives. Are we ready to give everything we have for Jesus, if necessary, then live with Him forever? (1 John 5:11-12.)

After His death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within His followers. The Holy Spirit gives peace, joy and hope also the power to overcome evil within us and around us (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 6:10-20). This is why Christians believe that our God is three-in-one: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The suffering of Jesus and His followers

Jesus warned His disciples that the elders, chief priests and teachers of the Old Testament Law would make Him suffer. He would be killed but on the third day He would rise from death (Luke 9:22).

He also warned His disciples they must be ready to "pick up your cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

Later, when the disciples (apostles) were preaching the Good News (Gospel) of Jesus the Christ, many were persecuted and some were killed (martyred):

- James was beheaded in Jerusalem in AD 45
- Matthew was beheaded in Ethiopia in AD 70
- Andrew was crucified in Achaia (Greece) in AD 70
- Thomas was burned alive in an oven in India in AD 70
- Luke was hung from an olive tree in Greece in AD 93

WARNINGS FROM JESUS

Jesus warned His followers that it is not good if someone gains many riches in this world but loses his soul (8:36). They will lose their eternal life in Heaven. He said that there is nothing more important than eternal life (8:37).

Jesus also spoke about His Second Coming. He promised to return in the glory of His Father and with the holy angels. When Jesus returns, He will not accept those who have not accepted Him (Mark 8:38).

Talk about this:

1. What compassion did Jesus show the people (8:2-3)?
2. Why did Jesus ask the disciples to help him with the miracle (8:6-8)?
3. What made Jesus sad (8:12,17)? What did Jesus then do or say (8:13,18)?
4. Why were the disciples compared to the people of Israel at the time of Ezekiel (8:18)?
5. What two questions did Jesus ask about Himself (8:27-29)? What is your answer?
6. What promise do we receive when we take up our own cross to follow Jesus? (8:34-35) Who gives faith to the followers of Jesus (Matthew 16:17)?
7. What is worth more than money? (8:36)
8. How do we prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus (8:38)?

Think about this: What compassion (8:2,3), faith (8:4,5) and commitment (8:6-8) do we need to do the work of Jesus today? How deaf and blind are you to the teachings and miracles of Jesus (8:18-21)? Pray to hear and see clearly what God is doing today. Pray for His gift of faith to do the work of Jesus and the divine wisdom to fulfil it. Pray also for the compassion of Jesus and faith to believe in miracles!

CONCLUSIONS

The book of Mark tells us the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus chose and taught His disciples to have faith in Him. He prepared them to do His good works with compassion in ministry of teaching. This included miracles of healing and release from evil spirits. He also taught them the truth about His heavenly Father, our Lord God Almighty.

Jesus gave His followers many examples of the Kingdom of God. He also warned everyone not to reject the promise of eternal life in Heaven. Instead, He warned His followers to feed daily on the bread of eternal life, which is Christ Himself.

Faith in Jesus is the most precious gift from God. The disciples of Jesus were at times slow to understand who He was and God's purpose for Him to die for them and all who believe in Him. We must use His promised gift of the Holy Spirit to change us and share this amazing Good News!

Spreading the Good News

Jesus told His disciples to teach everyone all that He taught them (Matthew 28:20). Some preachers teach the Good News of Jesus by only telling people that God loves everyone and will bless them and give them good things if they follow Jesus. Jesus came to tell the whole truth from God (John 18:37). God knows that we deserve to be punished for our sins and need to be set free from our sins. Jesus came to take the punishment for us by dying on the cross. If we repent and believe this, then we can be forgiven and accepted by God. Then He can give us a new purpose in this life and hope for the future. But there will be troubles at times. We must be ready to pick up our own cross with faith to follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). It is the whole Gospel that we must teach and preach. This is called spreading the Good News.

This is why Jesus promised to send the power of His Holy Spirit to empower us to do this after His return to Heaven. Pray for the compassion as well as the faith and commitment of Jesus to do this. Some will reject the followers of Jesus, but many will be given the faith to believe and the power to do His good works, including 'signs and wonders' in the name of Jesus. Pray, too, for wisdom to do only the 'commanded work' of God.

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