

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You? . . . . .	i
A Guide to Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search for Verifiable Truth . . . . .	iii
Commentary:	
The Man, Peter . . . . .	1
Introduction to Mark . . . . .	3
Mark 1 . . . . .	7
Mark 2 . . . . .	32
Mark 3 . . . . .	41
Mark 4 . . . . .	55
Mark 5 . . . . .	67
Mark 6 . . . . .	74
Mark 7 . . . . .	84
Mark 8 . . . . .	95
Mark 9 . . . . .	105
Mark 10 . . . . .	118
Mark 11 . . . . .	139
Mark 12 . . . . .	149
Mark 13 . . . . .	169
Mark 14 . . . . .	190
Mark 15 . . . . .	210
Mark 16 . . . . .	224
Introduction to I Peter . . . . .	229
I Peter 1 . . . . .	233
I Peter 2 . . . . .	251
I Peter 3 . . . . .	265
I Peter 4 . . . . .	279
I Peter 5 . . . . .	289
Introduction to II Peter . . . . .	298
II Peter 1 . . . . .	302
II Peter 2 . . . . .	319
II Peter 3 . . . . .	332
Appendix One: Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure . . . . .	342
Appendix Two: Textual Criticism . . . . .	349
Appendix Three: Doctrinal Statement . . . . .	352

## SPECIAL TOPICS IN MARK AND I & II PETER

<i>Archē</i> , Mark 1:1	9
Repentance, Mark 1:4	11
Confession, Mark 1:5	12
Adoptionism, Mark 1:10	14
Gnosticism, Mark 1:10	14
The Trinity, Mark 1:11	14
Symbolic Numbers in Scripture, Mark 1:13	15
Greek Terms for “Testing” and Their Connotations, Mark 1:13	18
Satan, Mark 1:13	19
Family of Herod the Great, Mark 1:14	21
Kingdom of God, Mark 1:15	22
Faith, <i>Pistis</i> (noun), <i>Pisteuō</i> (verb), <i>Pistos</i> (adjective), Mark 1:15	23
Sabbath, Mark 1:21	25
Scribes, Mark 1:22	25
The Demonic, Mark 1:23	26
The Holy One, Mark 1:24	27
Exorcism, Mark 1:25	28
Heart, Mark 2:6	34
Pharisees, Mark 2:16	37
Fasting, Mark 2:18	38
Herodians, Mark 3:6	43
Destruction ( <i>Apollumi</i> ), Mark 3:6	45
Son of God, Mark 3:11	46
The Number Twelve, Mark 3:14	47
The Apostles’ Names, Mark 3:16	48
Amen, Mark 3:28	51
The Personhood of the Holy Spirit, Mark 3:29	52
Eternal, Mark 3:29	53
“The Unpardonable Sin,” Mark 3:29	53
Interpreting Parables, Mark 4 Intro	57
Mystery in the NT, Mark 4:11	60
Need to Persevere, Mark 4:17	62
Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation, Mark 4:27-29	64
Anointing in the Bible, Mark 6:13	78
Hypocrites, Mark 7:6	87
Human Speech, Mark 7:20	89
Laying On of Hands, Mark 7:32	92
The Resurrection, Mark 8:31	101
Send ( <i>Apostellō</i> ), Mark 9:57	113

Where Are the Dead?, Mark 9:43 .....	115
<i>Ktisis</i> , Mark 10:6 .....	121
The Ten Commandments, Mark 10:19 .....	124
Wealth, Mark 10:23 .....	127
Glory, Mark 10:37 .....	133
Ransom/Redeem, Mark 10:45 .....	135
Jesus the Nazarene, Mark 10:42 .....	137
Forever (Greek Idioms), Mark. 11:14 .....	142
Effective Prayer, Mark 11:23-24 .....	146
Cornerstone, Mark 12:10 .....	152
The Sanhedrin, Mark 12:13 .....	153
Sadducees, Mark 12:18 .....	156
Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch, Mark 12:26 .....	158
Names for Deity, Mark 12:36 .....	162
Degrees of Rewards and Punishments, Mark 12:40 .....	165
Coins in Use in Palestine in Jesus' Day, Mark 12:42 .....	167
Apocalyptic Literature, Mark 13 Intro .....	174
The Two Questions Answered, Mark 13:4 .....	176
This Age and the Age to Come, Mark 13:8 .....	177
Abomination of Desolation, Mark 13:14 .....	179
Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance, Mark 13:20 .....	180
Intercessory Prayer, Mark 13:20 .....	181
Forty-two Months, Mark 13:26 .....	182
Coming In the Clouds, Mark 13:26 .....	184
Symbolic Numbers in Scripture, Mark 13:27 .....	185
Father, Mark 13:32 .....	177
Almsgiving, Mark 14:5 .....	194
Order of the Passover Service in First Century Judaism, Mark 14:22 .....	198
The Lord's Supper in John 6, Mark 14:22 .....	198
Covenant, Mark 14:24 .....	199
Poured Out, Mark 14:24 .....	200
The Hour, Mark 14:35 .....	203
Curse, ( <i>Anathema</i> ), Mark 14:71 .....	208
Pontius Pilate, Mark 15:1 .....	212
Women in the Bible, Mark 15:40 .....	220
The Women Who Followed Jesus, Mark 16:1 .....	225
Burial Spices, Mark 16:1 .....	227
Election, I Peter 1:2 .....	235
Believers' Inheritance, I Peter 1:4 .....	237
Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation, I Peter 1:5 .....	238
Jesus and the Spirit, I Peter 1:11 .....	241
The <i>Kerygma</i> of the Early Church, I Peter 1:11 .....	242
Paul's View of the Mosaic Law, I Peter 1:12 .....	242
Sanctification, I Peter 1:15 .....	244

Holy, I Peter 1:16 .....	245
Edify, I Peter 2:5 .....	253
Christianity is Corporate, I Peter 2:5 .....	253
Submission, I Peter 2:13 .....	257
Human Government, I Peter 2:13 .....	258
The Will ( <i>thelēna</i> ) of God, I Peter 2:15 .....	259
Paul's Admonition to Slaves, I Peter 2:18 .....	261
Righteousness, I Peter 3:14 .....	270
Hope, I Peter 3:15 .....	273
Where Are the Dead?, I Peter 3:18 .....	275
Vices and Virtues in the NT, I Peter 4:2 .....	280
Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol and Alcoholism, I Peter 4:3 .....	281
Why Do Christians Suffer?, I Peter 4:12 .....	286
<i>Koinōnia</i> , I Peter 4:13 .....	286
Form ( <i>Tupos</i> ), I Peter 5:3 .....	291
Personal Evil, I Peter 5:8 .....	293
Perseverance, I Peter 5:9 .....	294
Silas - Silvanus, I Peter 5:12 .....	296
Christian Growth, II Peter 1:5 .....	307
Assurance, II Peter 1:10 .....	309
Called, II Peter 1:10 .....	310
Apostasy ( <i>aphistēmi</i> ), II Peter 1:10 .....	311
Truth, II Peter 1:12 .....	313
"True" in John, II Peter 1:12 .....	314
Terms Used for the Second Coming, II Peter 1:16 .....	315
The Sons of God in Genesis 6, II Peter 2:4 .....	323
Destroy, Ruin, Corrupt ( <i>phtheirō</i> ), II Peter 2:12 .....	328
Fire, II Peter 3:5 .....	335
Bob's Evangelical Biases, II Peter 3:7 .....	337

# **A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?**

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

## **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

## **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph, as well as chapter, divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the intended meaning of the biblical author. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS<sup>4</sup>). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS<sup>4</sup> and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
East Texas Baptist University  
June 27, 1996

# **A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH**

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## **I. Presuppositions**

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  6. the words chosen to present the message

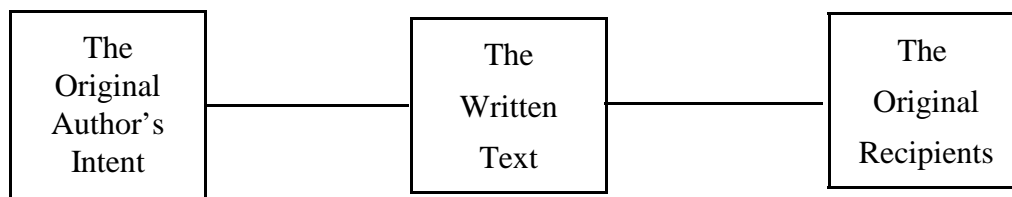
## 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

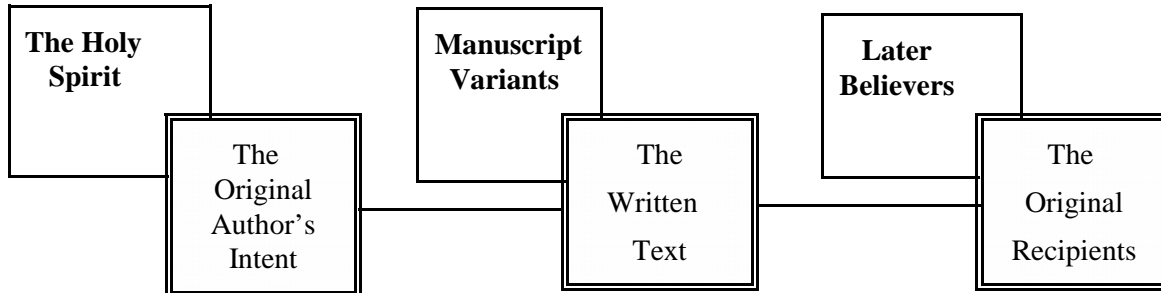
### II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly



influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author’s
  - a. historical setting
  - b. literary context
2. the original author’s choice of
  - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
  - b. contemporary word usage
  - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
  - a. relevant parallel passages
  - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
  1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  4. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - a. Old Testament
      - (1) Hebrew narrative
      - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - (4) Law codes
    - b. New Testament
      - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - (2) Parables (Gospels)
      - (3) Letters/epistles
      - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
  1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
  1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - a. the author
    - b. the date
    - c. the recipients
    - d. the specific reason for writing
    - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - f. references to historical people and events
  3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author’s logic and textual design.
  4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.

D. The fourth reading cycle

1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
  - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
  - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
  - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
  - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
  - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
  - c. contrasting concepts
3. List the following items
  - a. significant terms
  - b. unusual terms
  - c. important grammatical structures
  - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
4. Look for relevant parallel passages
  - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
    - (1) “systematic theology” books
    - (2) reference Bibles
    - (3) concordances
  - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
  - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - a. study Bibles
  - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - c. Bible introductions
  - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as “understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day.”

Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

#### V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).

- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:  
 “The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”
- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:  
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible as *God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”
- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:  
 “No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

## VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS<sup>4</sup>)
  2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  5. Today’s English Version (TEV)
  6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.
- D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  1. literary context
  2. historical, cultural insights
  3. grammatical information
  4. word studies
  5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”

2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  3. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
  2. alternate word meanings
  3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# PETER, THE MAN

## HIS FAMILY

- A. Peter's family lived in Galilee of the Gentiles in the city of Bethsaida on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (or the Sea of Tiberias cf. John 1:44), but apparently moved to Capernaum at some point (cf. Mark 1:21,29).
- B. Peter's father's name was Jonah (cf. Matt. 16:17) or John (cf. John 1:42; 21:15-17).
- C. His given name was Simon (cf. Mark 1:16,29,30,36), which was common in Palestine of the first century. It was the Jewish form of Symeon (cf. Acts 15:14; II Pet. 1:1), which was the name of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (cf. Gen. 29:33; Exod. 1:1).

Jesus renamed him Peter (*Petros*, which means "rock," meant to describe his eventual strength and stability) in Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; and John 1:42. The Aramaic form is *Cephas* (cf. John 1:42; I Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9,11,14). Often in the NT these two names are given together (cf. Matt. 16:16; Luke 5:8; John 1:40; 6:8,68; 13:6,9,24,36; 18:10,15,25; 20:2,6; 21:2-3,7,11,15).
- D. Peter's brother's name was Andrew (cf. Mark 1:16). He was a disciple of John the Baptist (cf. John 1:35,40) and later a believer and follower of Jesus (cf. John 1:36-37). He brought Simon to Jesus (cf. John 1:41). Several months later Jesus confronted them by the Sea of Galilee and called them to be His official full-time disciples (cf. Matt. 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18; and Luke 5:1-11).
- E. He was married (cf. Mark 1:30; I Cor. 9:5), but there is no mention of children.

## HIS OCCUPATION

- A. Peter's family owned several fishing boats and even hired servants.
- B. Peter's family may have been partners with James, John, and their father, Zebedee (cf. Luke 5:10).
- C. Peter briefly returned to fishing after Jesus' death (cf. John 21).

## HIS PERSONALITY

- A. Peter's strengths
  1. He was a dedicated follower, but quite impulsive (cf. Mark 9:5; John 13:4-11).
  2. He attempted acts of faith, but often failed (e.g. walking on water, cf. Matt. 14:28-31).
  3. He was brave and willing to die (cf. Matt. 26:51-52; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11).
  4. After His resurrection, Jesus addressed him personally as the discredited leader of the Twelve in John 21 and provided an opportunity for repentance and restoration to leadership.
- B. Peter's weaknesses
  1. He had initial tendencies toward Jewish legalism
    - a. eating with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-21)
    - b. food laws (Acts 10:9-16)
  2. He, like all the Apostles, did not fully understand Jesus' radical new teachings and their implications
    - a. Mark 9:5-6
    - b. John 13:6-11; 18:10-11
  3. He was personally and severely chastised by Jesus (Mark 8:33; Matt. 16:23)
  4. He was found sleeping instead of praying in Jesus' great hour of need in Gethsemane (Mark. 14:32-42; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:40-60)
  5. He repeatedly denied knowing Jesus (Mark 14:66-72; Matt. 26:69-75; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:16-18,25-27)

## **HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE APOSTOLIC GROUP**

- A. There are four lists of the Apostles (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Peter is always listed first. The Twelve were divided into three groups of four. I believe this allowed them to rotate home to check on their families.
- B. Peter often serves as the spokesman for the Apostolic group (cf. Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21). These passages have also been used to assert Peter's authority within the group (cf. Matt. 16:18). However, within this very context he is chided by Jesus as a tool of Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33).  
Also, when the disciples are arguing over who is greatest, Peter is not assumed to take that position (cf. Matt. 20:20-28, especially v. 24; Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45).
- C. Peter was not the leader of the Jerusalem church. This fell to James, Jesus' half-brother (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9,12).

## **HIS MINISTRY AFTER JESUS' RESURRECTION**

- A. Peter's leadership role is clearly seen in the early chapters of Acts
  1. He led in the election of Judas' replacement (cf. Acts 1:15-26).
  2. He preached the first sermon on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2).
  3. He healed a lame man and preached the second recorded sermon (cf. Acts 3:1-10; 3:11-26).
  4. He spoke boldly to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4.
  5. He presided over the church discipline of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.
  6. He spoke at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:7-11.
  7. Several other events and miracles are attributed to him in Acts.
- B. Peter, however, did not always embody the gospel's implications
  1. He retained an OT mind-set (cf. Gal. 2:11-14).
  2. He had to have a special revelation to include Cornelius (cf. Acts 10) and other Gentiles.

## **THE SILENT YEARS**

- A. There is little or no information about Peter after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15
  1. Galatians 1:18
  2. Galatians 2:7-21
  3. I Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5
- B. Early church tradition
  1. Peter's being martyred in Rome is mentioned in Clement of Rome's letter to the church at Corinth in A.D. 95.
  2. Tertullian (A.D. 150-222) also notes Peter's martyrdom in Rome under Nero (A.D. 54-68).
  3. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200) says Peter was killed in Rome.
  4. Origen (A.D. 252) says Peter was martyred by crucifixion, head down, in Rome.

# INTRODUCTION TO MARK

## OPENING STATEMENT

- A. The ancient church usually bypassed copying, studying, and teaching Mark in preference to Matthew and Luke because they saw Mark as a “reader’s digest” version (i.e., abridged Gospel), a view which is specifically stated later by Augustine.
- B. Mark is not often quoted by the early Greek church fathers or the second century apologists (defenders of the faith).
- C. Since the rise of the modern historical-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation, the Gospel of Mark has taken on new significance because it is viewed as the first written Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke use its outline in their presentations of Jesus’ life and significance. Thereby Mark becomes the foundational document of the church, the first official written account of Jesus’ life.

## GENRE

- A. The Gospels are not modern biographies or histories. They are selective theological writings used to introduce Jesus to different audiences and bring them to faith in Him. They are “good news” accounts of Jesus’ life for the purpose of evangelism (cf. John 20:30-31).
- B. Mark addresses four distinct historical settings and four theological purposes
  - 1. the life and teachings of Jesus
  - 2. the life and ministry of Peter
  - 3. the needs of the early church
  - 4. the evangelistic purpose of John Mark
- C. The four Gospels are unique in Near Eastern and Greco-Roman literature. The inspired authors had the Spirit-led task of selecting Jesus’ teachings and actions which clearly revealed His character and/or purpose.

They arranged these words and actions in different ways. One example would be in comparing Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) with Luke’s Sermon on the Plain (cf. Luke 6:20-49). It becomes obvious that Matthew tended to collect all of Jesus’ teachings into one long sermon, while Luke spread these same teachings throughout his Gospel. This same thing could be said about Matthew putting Jesus’ miracles together, while Luke spreads them throughout his Gospel.

This implies the Gospel writers’ ability not only to select and arrange Jesus’ teachings, but also to adapt them for their own theological purposes (read Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 113-134). When reading the Gospels one must continue to ask what theological point these writers are trying to make. Why include this particular event, miracle, lesson at this point in their presentation of Jesus?
- D. Mark’s Gospel is a good example of Koine Greek as a second language of the people of the Mediterranean world. Mark’s mother tongue was Aramaic (as was Jesus’ and all Jews in first century Palestine). This Semitic flavor is often evident in Mark’s Gospel.

## AUTHORSHIP

- A. John Mark has traditionally been identified with the Apostle Peter in writing this Gospel. The work itself (like all the Gospels) is anonymous.
- B. Another evidence of Peter’s eyewitness account is the fact that Mark does not record three special events in which Peter was personally involved.
  - 1. his walking on water (cf. Matt. 14:28-33)
  - 2. his being the spokesperson at Caesarea Philippi for the faith of the Twelve (cf. Matt. 16:13-20), in Mark only 8:27-30 and the “on this rock” and “keys of the kingdom” passages are omitted.
  - 3. his procurement of the temple tax for himself and Jesus (cf. Matt. 17:24-27)Perhaps Peter’s modesty motivated him not to emphasize these events in his sermons in Rome.

C. Early church tradition

1. I Clements, written from Rome about A.D. 95, alludes to Mark (as does *Shepherd of Hermes*).
2. Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis (about A.D. 130), wrote *Interpretation of the Lord's Sayings*, which is quoted by Eusebius (A.D. 275-339) in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3:39:15. He asserts that Mark was Peter's interpreter who recorded accurately, but not chronologically, Peter's memories of Jesus. Apparently Mark took and adapted Peter's sermons and organized them into a Gospel presentation. Papias claims to have received this information from "the elder," which could refer to the Apostle John.
3. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), in quoting Mark 3:17, adds that it comes from Peter's memory.
4. The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark, written about A.D. 180, identifies Peter as the eyewitness of Mark's Gospel. It also states that Mark wrote the Gospel from Italy after Peter's death (traditionally in Rome around A.D. 65).
5. Irenaeus, writing about A.D. 180, mentions John Mark as Peter's interpreter and compiler of his memoirs after his death (cf. *Contra Haereses* 3:1:2).
6. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 195) asserts that those who heard Peter preach in Rome asked Mark to record these sermons.
7. The Muratorian Fragment (i.e., a list of accepted books), written about A.D. 200 from Rome, although the text is incomplete, seems to affirm John Mark's recording Peter's sermons.
8. Tertullian (A.D. 200) in *Against Marcion* (4:5) says Mark published Peter's memories.
9. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Vol. 8, p. 606, Walter Wessel makes the interesting comment that the above early church traditions are from geographically diverse church centers
  - a. Papias from Asia Minor
  - b. Anti-Marcion Prologue and the Muratorian Fragment both from Rome
  - c. Irenaeus (cf. *Adv. Haer.* 3:1:1) from Lyons in France. Irenaeus' tradition is also found in Tertullian (cf. *Adv. Marc.* 4:5) from north Africa and Clement of Alexandria, Egypt (cf. *Hypotyposeis* 6, quoted by Eusebius, *Eccl. His.* 2:15:1-2; 3:24:5-8; 6:14:6-7). This geographical diversity gives credence to its trustworthiness because of the tradition's wide acceptance in early Christianity.
10. According to Eusebius' *Eccl. His.* 4:25, Origen (A.D. 230) in *Commentary on Matthew* (there is no known commentary on Mark by anyone until the fifth century) says Mark wrote the Gospel as Peter explained it to him.
11. Eusebius himself discusses the Gospel of Mark in *Eccl. His.* 2:15 and says Mark recorded Peter's sermons at the behest of those who heard them so that they could be read in all the churches. Eusebius bases this tradition on the writings of Clement of Alexandria.

D. What do we know about John Mark

1. His mother was a well known believer in Jerusalem in whose house the church met (possibly the night of the Lord's Supper, cf. Mark 14:14-15; Acts 1:13-14; Acts 12:12). He was possibly the unnamed man who fled "naked" from Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52).
2. He accompanied his uncle Barnabas (cf. Col. 4:10) and Paul back to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25).
3. He was a companion of Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but returned home suddenly (Acts 13:13).
4. Later Barnabas wanted to take Mark on a second missionary journey, but this caused a terrible disagreement between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:37-40).
5. He was later reunited with Paul and became a friend and co-worker (Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24).
6. He was a companion and co-worker with Peter (I Pet. 5:13), possibly in Rome.

- E. Mark's personal knowledge of the life of Jesus seems confirmed by 14:51-52, where a man flees naked from the garden of Gethsemane just after Jesus' arrest. This unusual and totally unexpected detail seems to reflect Mark's personal experience.

## DATE

- A. The Gospel is the eyewitness account and interpretation of Jesus' life, actions, and teachings, apparently taken from Peter's sermons. They were compiled and distributed after his death, so says the Anti-Marcionite Prologue and Irenaeus (who also adds after the death of Paul). Both Peter and Paul were martyred under Nero (A.D. 54-68) in Rome (church tradition). The exact dates are uncertain, but if true, then probably the date of Mark was in the mid sixties.
- B. It is possible that the Anti-Marcionite Prologue and Irenaeus do not refer to Peter's death, but his departure (i.e., exodus) from Rome. There is some traditional evidence (i.e., Justin and Hippolytus) that Peter visited Rome during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41 to 54), (Eusebius' *Eccl. His.* 2:14:6).



- C. It seems that Luke concludes Acts with Paul still in prison in the early sixties. If it is true that Luke used Mark in his Gospel, then it must have been written before Acts and, therefore, earlier than the early sixties.
- D. The authorship and date of Mark does not in any way affect the historical/theological/evangelistic truths of this (or any) Gospel. Jesus, not the human author, is the key figure!
- E. It is surprising that none of the Gospels (even John, written A.D. 95-96) refers or alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) in A.D. 70 by the Roman general, later Emperor, Titus. Mark was probably written before this event. It is even possible that Matthew and Luke were written before this major judgment on Judaism. It simply must be stated that the exact dates for the composition of the Synoptic Gospels are uncertain at this time (as is their literary relationship to one another).

## RECIPIENTS

- A. Mark is connected to Rome by several early church writers
  - 1. I Peter 5:13
  - 2. Anti-Marcionite Prologue (Italy)
  - 3. Irenaeus (Rome, cf. *Adv. Haer.* 3:1:2)
  - 4. Clement of Alexandria (Rome cf. Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* 4:14:6-7; 6:14:5-7)
- B. Mark does not specifically state his purposes in writing the Gospel. There have been several theories.
  - 1. an evangelistic tract (cf. 1:1) written specifically to Romans (cf. 1:15; 10:45)
    - a. Jewish elements interpreted (cf. 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42)
    - b. Aramaic words translated (cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:1,34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22,34)
    - c. use of many Latin words (cf. executioner, 6:27; sextanus, 7:4; census, 12:14; quadrans, 12:42; praetorium, 15:16; centurio, 15:39; flagellare, 15:42)
    - d. inclusive language in relation to Jesus
      - (1) inclusive language relating to those in Palestine (cf. 1:5,28,33,39; 2:13; 4:1; 6:33,39,41,55)
      - (2) inclusive language relating to all people (cf. 13:10)
  - 2. persecution following the fire in Rome in A.D. 64, which Nero blamed on the Christians, initiated a terrible wave of persecution towards believers. Mark often mentions persecution (cf. Jesus' suffering 8:31; 9:39; 10:33-34,45 and His followers' suffering 8:34-38; 10:21,30,35-44).
  - 3. the delayed Second Coming
  - 4. the death of eyewitnesses to Jesus, especially the Apostles
  - 5. the rise of heresies within the wide-spread Christian churches
    - a. Judaizers (Galatians)
    - b. Gnostics (I John)
    - c. the combination of a. and b. (i.e., Colossians and Ephesians; II Pet. 2)

## STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

- A. Mark is structured in such a way that the last week of Jesus' life is the focus of over one-third of the book. The theological significance of the Passion Week is obvious.
- B. Since Mark is, according to early church tradition, taken from Peter's sermons, (i.e., probably in Rome) it becomes evident why no birth narratives were included. Mark begins where Peter's experience starts, with Jesus as an adult, and is theologically related to John the Baptist's message of repentance and faith in preparation for the work of Messiah.
 

Peter's sermons must have used the concepts of "Son of Man" and "Son of God." The Gospel reflects Peter's own theology of Jesus' person. At first He was a great teacher and healer, but it became obvious He was the Messiah! This Messiah was not the expected conquering military general, but a Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53).
- C. Mark's basic geographical structural outline is shared by the other Synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew and Luke)
  - 1. a Galilean Ministry (1:14-6:13)
  - 2. ministry outside Galilee (6:14-8:30)
  - 3. the journey to Jerusalem (8:31-10:52)
  - 4. the last week in the Jerusalem area (11:1-16:8)

- D. It is even possible that Mark's structure emulates the basic pattern of early Apostolic preaching (i.e., Acts 10:37-43, cf. C. H. Dodd's *New Testament Studies* pp. 1-11). If this is true then the written Gospels are the culmination of a period of oral traditions (i.e., *kerygma*). Judaism considered oral teaching to be superior to written texts.
- E. Mark is characterized by a fast moving account (i.e., "immediately," cf. 1:10) of the life of Jesus. Mark does not record long teaching sessions, but moves rapidly from event to event (i.e., his repeated use of "immediately"). Mark's Gospel reveals Jesus by His actions. However, this fast-paced account is strewn with vivid eyewitness details (i.e., Peter).

### **READING CYCLE ONE (see p. v)**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

### **READING CYCLE TWO (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# MARK 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Preaching of John the Baptist 1:1-8	John the Baptist Prepares the Way 1:1-8	Activity of John the Baptist 1:1-8	The Preaching of John the Baptist 1:1-3 1:4-5 1:6-8	The Proclamation of John the Baptist 1:1-8
The Baptism of Jesus 1:9-11	John Baptizes Jesus 1:9-11	Jesus' Baptism 1:9-11	The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus 1:9-11	Jesus Is Baptized 1:9-11
The Temptation of Jesus 1:12-13	Satan Tempts Jesus 1:12-13	Jesus' Temptation 1:12-13	1:12-13	Testing in the Desert 1:12-13
The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry 1:14-15	Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry 1:14-15	Beginning of Jesus' Activity in Galilee 1:14-15	Jesus Calls Four Fishermen 1:14-15	Jesus Begins to Proclaim the Message 1:14-15
The Calling of Four Fishermen 1:16-20	Four Fishermen Called as Disciples 1:16-20	1:16-20	1:16-18 1:19-20	The First Four Disciples Are Called 1:16-18 1:19-20
The Man With An Unclean Spirit 1:21-28	Jesus Cast Out An Unclean Spirit 1:21-28	1:21-28	A Man with An Evil Spirit 1:21-22 1:23-24 1:25 1:26-27 1:28	Jesus Teaches in Capernaum and Cures A Demonic 1:21-22 1:23-28
The Healing of Many People 1:29-34	Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed 1:29-31 Many Healed After Sabbath Sunset 1:32-34	1:29-31 1:32-34	Jesus Heals Many People 1:29-31 1:32-34	Cure of Simon's Mother-in-Law 1:29-31 A Number of Cures 1:32-34
A Preaching Tour 1:35-39	Preaching in Galilee 1:35-39	1:35-39	Jesus Preaches in Galilee 1:35-37 1:38 1:39	Jesus Quietly Leaves Capernaum and Travels Through Galilee 1:35-39

The Cleansing of a Leper	Jesus Cleanses a Leper	Jesus Heals a Man	Cure of a Man Suffering From a Virulent Skin Disease
1:40-45	1:40-45	1:40-45	1:40-45
		1:40	
		1:41-44	
		1:45	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**1:1 “The beginning”** Does this introductory phrase refer to

1. the very beginning as in Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1
2. the beginning of Jesus’ incarnation as in I John 1:1
3. the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (i.e., Peter’s personal experiences)

The first paragraph specifically refers to OT prophecy about the Messiah from Isaiah. The gospel story begins in the prophetic tradition of Israel. The quote in vv. 2 and 3 is a combination of Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3.

---

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, and Three.**

## SPECIAL TOPIC: *ARCHĒ*

The term “domain” is the Greek term *archē*, which means the “beginning” or “origin” of something.

1. beginning of the created order (cf. John 1:1; I John 1:1; Heb. 1:10)
2. the beginning of the gospel (cf. Mark 1:1; Phil. 4:15; II Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:3)
3. first eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:2)
4. beginning signs (miracles, cf. John 2:11)
5. beginning principles (cf. Heb. 5:12)
6. beginning assurance based on gospel truths (cf. Heb. 3:14)
7. the beginning, Col. 1:18; Rev. 3:14

It came to be used of “rule” or “authority”

1. of human governing officials
  - a. Luke 12:11
  - b. Luke 20:20
  - c. Romans 13:3; Titus 3:1
2. of angelic authorities
  - a. Romans 8:38
  - b. I Cor. 15:24
  - c. Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12
  - d. Col. 1:16; 2:10,15
  - e. Jude v. 6

These false teachers despise all authority, earthly and heavenly. They are antinomian libertines. They put themselves and their desires first before God, angels, civil authorities, and church leaders.

▣ **“of the gospel”** With Mark probably being the first written Gospel, this is the first use of the term *euangelion* (cf. 1:14,15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) by a Gospel writer (Paul’s use in Gal. 2:2 and I Thess. 2:9 would be chronologically earlier). It is literally “the good news” or “the good message.” This obviously reflects Isa. 61:1 and possibly 40:9 and 52:7. The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* says “Mark’s use of the word ‘gospel’ is akin to that in Paul where it can mean either the act of proclaiming or the content of what is proclaimed” (p. 24).

▣ **“of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”** Its grammatical form can be understood as (1) the message given by Jesus or (2) the message about Jesus. Number 2 is probably the intended meaning. However, the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, published by IVP, says “The genitive (‘of’) is probably both subjective and objective: Jesus proclaims the gospel and it proclaims his story” (p. 285).

Verse 1 is not a complete sentence. It is possibly the title of the book. The ancient Greek uncial Manuscripts  $\aleph$ , A, B, D, L, and W add the phrase “Son of God” which is followed by the NKJV and the NRSV, TEV, and NIV, while it is missing in (1)  $\aleph^*$ ; (2) the Palestinian Syriac; (3) one Coptic manuscript; (4) the Georgian Version; as well as from the (5) Armenian translation and (6) a quote of this text from Origen’s commentary on John. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the inclusion a “C” rating (difficult to decide). See Special Topic on “Son of God” at 3:11.

It is difficult for modern Christians who love and trust the Bible to deal rationally with these Greek manuscript variants, but as difficult as it is for our assumptions about inspiration and preservation of God’s self-revelation, they are a reality. This addition even looks purposeful, not accidental. Early orthodox scribes were conscious of the early heretical views about Jesus, such as adoptionism, which asserted that Jesus became the Son of God. These early scribes often modified the Greek texts they copied to make them more theologically orthodox (cf. I John 5:7-8). For more reading on this troubling purposeful alteration of Greek manuscripts by orthodox scribes see Bart D. Ehrmans’ *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. He specifically discusses Mark 1:1 on pp. 72-75.

▣ **“of Jesus”** Usually in first century Judaism the father named the child. In this case the heavenly Father, through an angel, named the child. Jewish names often carried symbolic meaning; this one was no exception. Jesus is a combination of two Hebrew nouns: (1) YHWH and (2) salvation. The significance is captured in Matt. 1:21. Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua. He proved to be the new Moses, the new Joshua, and the new High Priest.

▣ **“Christ”** This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah,” which means “an anointed one.” In the OT God’s anointing of leaders (i.e., prophets, priests, and kings) symbolized His calling and equipping for an assigned task.

The term “Messiah” is not used often in the OT (cf. Dan. 9:25,26 for the eschatological king), but the concept surely is. It is parallel to Matt. 1:1, “son of David,” which refers to a royal descendant of Israel’s ideal king “David.” God promised David

in II Samuel 7 that one of his descendants would always reign in Israel. This promise seemed shattered by the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of its inhabitants (i.e., 586 B.C.). However, the prophets began to see a future Davidic seed (i.e., Isaiah, Micah, Malachi). Jesus is the promised “son of David,” “son of man” (cf. Dan. 7:13), and “son of God” (used five times in Mark).

It is striking that the only time in the entire Gospel that the designation “Jesus Christ” is used is in the opening verse (only twice in Matt. and John and not at all in Luke). Normally, Mark uses “Jesus.” This usage fits the theological emphasis of Mark on the humanity of Jesus, while His deity is veiled (i.e., Messianic secret) until the completion of His Messianic mission (i.e., Suffering Servant). It is not until the book of Acts that “Jesus Christ” becomes a recurrent title.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2-8**

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; <sup>3</sup>THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’” <sup>4</sup>John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. <sup>8</sup>I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

**1:2 “As it is written”** The word “written” is PERFECT TENSE, which was a Jewish idiom used to denote God’s eternal revelation (i.e., Scripture).

▣ **“in Isaiah the prophet”** This quote is a combination of Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3. It is not from the Hebrew Masoretic Text or the Greek Septuagint of Isa. 40:3. Because of this some scribes changed the text to “written in the prophets” (i.e., in the Prophets section of the OT canon). The SINGULAR is found in the Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, L and D, but the PLURAL is in MSS A, and W.

Isaiah 40-66 has two major eschatological emphases: (1) the Suffering Servant (i.e., especially 52:13-53:12) and (2) the new age of the Spirit (especially 56-66). In the following brief opening of Mark there are several possible allusions to Isaiah.

▣ **“SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU”** The term “messenger” can refer to an angel (cf. Exod. 23:20a, which would be another allusion to the Exodus), but here it refers to a “messenger” (cf. Mal. 3:1). This may be a word play on the term gospel (i.e., good message). This is one of the few OT quotes in Mark which was written primarily to Romans. It refers to the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. v. 4). It shows that the OT prophetic tradition is being fulfilled (this is also reflected in Jesus’ healings and exorcisms, which are also Messianic prophecies in Isaiah). The ministry of John the Baptist is mentioned in all four Gospels.

**1:3 “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS”** This is a quote of Isa. 40:3 from an unknown source. The term “wilderness” means uninhabited pasture land rather than dry, windswept, sandy desert.

▣ **“MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which denotes urgency. In the MT, Lord (i.e., *adon*) is read, but YHWH (LORD) is in the Hebrew text. The phrase originally referred to physical preparation for a royal visit (cf. Isa. 57:14; 62:10). It came to refer metaphorically to the ministry of John the Baptist spiritually preparing the way for Jesus the Messiah who is also called “Lord” (i.e., *kurios*).

▣ **“MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT”** The MT and LXX have “make straight the paths of our God.” Mark (or Peter) modified the text (or quotes an unknown textual form) to make it specifically relate to Jesus, not YHWH.

**1:4 “John the Baptist”** Why did John baptize with water?

1. OT precedent to signify the inauguration of the “new covenant” (cf. Exod. 19:10,14; Isa. 1:16; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25)
2. a cleansing act from ceremonial defilement (cf. Leviticus 15).
3. a prophetic eschatological metaphor of life-giving water from God (e.g., Isa. 12:2-3; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1; Zech. 13:1; 14:8; Rev. 22:1)
4. imitation of proselyte baptism as the initiation rite to become part of the people of God
5. a rabbinic way of preparing all pilgrims to approach YHWH in His temple (possibly by immersion, cf. Miqvaot tractate in *Mishnah*). This ritual bath is still practiced by Muslims before entering a mosque.

▣ **“appeared”** This may be Mark’s way of alluding to the prophecy of the surprising appearance of Elijah before “the sudden appearance” of Messiah (cf. Mal. 3:1).

▣ **“preaching”** This is the term “heralding” (*kērussō*), which means “to proclaim widely or publicly a message” (cf. 1:4,7,14,38,39,45). Mark does not use the VERB form of gospel (*euaggelizō*).

John came preaching a baptism for repentance (see Special Topic following). This same message was continued by Jesus, but with the added emphasis of “faith” (see Special Topic at 1:15). The twin covenant needs of repentance and faith shown by baptism becomes the items of the Apostolic sermons in Acts (i.e., the *kerygma*)

1. Peter
  - a. first sermon of the church (Acts 2:37-39)
    - (1) repent
    - (2) be baptized
  - b. second sermon of the church (Acts 3:16,19)
    - (1) faith
    - (2) repent
2. Philip (Acts 8:12)
  - a. believe
  - b. be baptized
3. Paul
  - a. Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31,33)
    - (1) believe
    - (2) be baptized
  - b. goodbye to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:21)
    - (1) repentance toward God
    - (2) faith in Christ
  - c. testimony before Agrippa (Acts 26:18)
    - (1) turn from darkness (Satan), i.e., repent
    - (2) to the light (God)

For me the requirements of the New Covenant are

1. repent
2. believe
3. obey
4. persevere

The goal of the New Covenant is Christlikeness now so that others will see the change and be attracted to faith in Christ!

▣ **“baptism of repentance”** The baptism is not the mechanism of forgiveness, but the occasion of the believers’ public profession of faith. This is not a sacramental act, but a new attitude toward sin and a new relationship with God. It is an outward sign of an inner change.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE

Repentance (along with faith) is a covenant requirement of both the Old Covenant (*Nacham*, BDB 636, e.g., 13:12; 32:12,14; *Shuv*, BDB 996, e.g., I Kgs. 8:47; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30) and the New Covenant.

1. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3,8)
2. Jesus (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3)
3. Peter (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18; II Pet. 3:9)
4. Paul (Acts 13:24; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 2:9-10)

But what is repentance? Is it sorrow? Is it a cessation of sin? The best chapter in the NT for understanding the different connotations of this concept is II Corinthians 7:8-11, where three related, but different, Greek terms are used.

1. “sorrow” (*lupē*, cf. vv. 8 [twice], 9 [thrice], 10 [twice], 11). It means grief or distress and has a theologically neutral connotation.
2. “repentance” (*metanoeō*, cf. vv. 9,10). It is a compound of “after” and “mind,” which implies a new mind, a new way of thinking, a new attitude toward life and God. This is true repentance.
3. “regret” (*metamelomai*, cf. vv. 8[twice], 10). It is a compound of “after” and “care.” It is used of Judas in Matt. 27:3 and Esau in Heb. 12:16-17. It implies sorrow over the consequences, not over the acts.

Repentance and faith are the required covenant acts (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21). There are some texts which imply that God gives repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25). But most of the texts see this as a necessary human covenantal response to God's offer of a free salvation.

The definitions of both the Hebrew and Greek terms are required to grasp the full meaning of repentance. The Hebrew demands "a change of action," while the Greek demands "a change of mind." The saved person receives a new mind and heart. He thinks differently and lives differently. Instead of "What's in it for me?" the question is now "What is God's will?" Repentance is not an emotion that fades or a total sinlessness, but a new relationship with the Holy One that transforms the believer progressively into a holy one.

▣ **"for the forgiveness of sins"** The term "forgiveness" literally means "put away." This is one of several biblical terms for forgiveness. It has metaphorical connections to the OT Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16) where one of the two special goats is driven away from the camp of Israel, symbolically bearing the sin away (cf. Lev. 16:21-22; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 2:24).

The phrase "of sins" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE.

**1:5 "all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem"** This is an oriental overstatement (i.e., hyperbole), but it shows the tremendous impact of John's preaching. He was the first prophetic voice since Malachi some 400 years earlier. This is IMPERFECT TENSE which means that people were continually coming because they recognized John as a prophet.

▣ **"being baptized"** This is also IMPERFECT TENSE which speaks of continuous action in past time. Many Jews were sensing a new day of God's activity and were preparing for it.

▣ **"confessing their sins"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE, which literally means "to say the same." This was their public profession of their need for spiritual forgiveness.

There is the implication that if these Jews repented and changed their lifestyles, YHWH would fully forgive their sins (cf. 1:4; Matt. 3:6; Luke 3:3). This is surely the OT pattern. It involved full forgiveness through repentance, faith, lifestyle change, and now baptism as an outward symbol! This OT pattern is modified by Jesus' Messianic ministry. The same items are still valid, but now personal faith in Jesus as the Christ is the central issue (cf. Acts 2:38; 3:16,19; 20:21). The four Gospels form a transitional period. Mark 1:14-15 is in the John the Baptist period, but it theologically foreshadows the finished gospel message (i.e., repent, believe, and live a new life). The main issue is who Jesus is! He is YHWH's representative, revealer, and agent of redemption and judgment. This is the reason for the Messianic Secret in Mark. Jesus is fully God from the very beginning (i.e., virgin conception), but this was not fully revealed until after His resurrection and ascension.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

There are two forms of the same Greek root used for confession or profession, *homologeō* and *exomologeō*. The compound term James uses is from *homo*, the same; *legō*, to speak; and *ex*, out of. The basic meaning is to say the same thing, to agree with. The *ex* added to the idea of a public declaration.

A. The English translations of this word group are

1. praise
2. agree
3. declare
4. profess
5. confess

B. This word group had two seemingly opposite usages

1. to praise (God)
2. to admit sin

These may have developed from mankind's sense of the holiness of God and its own sinfulness. To acknowledge one truth is to acknowledge both.

C. The NT usages of the word group are

1. to promise (cf. Matt. 14:7; Acts 7:17)
2. to agree or consent to something (cf. John 1:20; Luke 22:6; Acts 24:14; Heb. 11:13)
3. to praise (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11; 15:9)
4. to assent to

- a. a person (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; 12:42; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; I John 2:23; Rev. 3:5)



- b. a truth (cf. Acts 23:8; II Cor. 11:13; I John 4:2)
- 5. to make a public declaration of (legal sense developed into religious affirmation, cf. Acts 24:14; I Tim. 6:13)
  - a. without admission of guilt (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:23)
  - b. with an admission of guilt (cf. Matt. 3:6; Acts 19:18; Heb. 4:14; James 5:16; I John 1:9)

**1:6 “John was clothed with camel’s hair”** This was his normal everyday clothing (i.e., PERFECT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE). This was not the skin of a camel, but cloth woven from its hair (cf. II Kgs. 1:8; Matt. 3:4). He was a man of the desert and a prophet (cf. Zech. 13:4). John dressed like Elijah, who Mal. 3:1 and 4:5 said would be the forerunner of the Messiah.

▣ **“locusts and wild honey”** This was typical food of desert people. Locusts were levitically clean and acceptable food (cf. Lev. 11:22). He ate what was naturally available.

**1:7** This verse and v. 8 show the preparatory theme of John’s message. He recognized his role and place in relation to God’s Coming One (cf. John 3:30). He felt himself to be a servant, a slave (i.e., only slaves took off another’s shoes). John’s self-depreciation is recorded in all four Gospels (cf. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; and John 1:27; also in Paul’s preaching in Acts 13:25). This was probably included by the Gospel writers because a heretical following later developed around John the Baptist (cf. Acts 18:24-19:7).

**1:8 “I baptized you with water”** Remember, John’s baptism was preparatory. This does not refer to Christian baptism. John was the last OT prophet (cf. Luke 16:16), a transition preacher, not the first gospel preacher (cf. Luke 16:16; Acts 19:17). He, like the quotes from Isaiah, links the old covenant and the new covenant.

▣ **“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”** This is in contrast to John’s baptism. The Messiah will inaugurate the new age of the Spirit. His baptism will be with (or “in” or “by”) the Spirit. There has been much discussion among denominations as to what event in the Christian experience this refers. Some take it to refer to an empowering experience after salvation, a kind of second blessing. Personally I think it refers to becoming a Christian (cf. I Cor. 12:13). I do not deny later fillings and equippings, but I believe there is only one initial spiritual baptism into Christ in which believers identify with Jesus’ death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12). This initiating work of the Spirit is delineated in John 16:8-11. In my understanding the works of the Holy Spirit are:

1. convicting of sin
2. revealing the truth about Christ
3. leading to acceptance of the gospel
4. baptizing into Christ
5. convicting the believer of continuing sin
6. forming Christlikeness in the believer

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-11**

**<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; <sup>11</sup>and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."**

**1:9 “Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee”** Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, lived a few years in Egypt, and then settled in Nazareth, the hometown of Joseph and Mary, which was a small, new settlement of Judeans in the north. Jesus’ early ministry was in this northern area around the Sea of Galilee, which fulfills the prophecy of Isa. 9:1.

▣ **“Jesus. . . was baptized”** The Gospels differ in their early chronologies of Jesus’ ministries in Galilee and Judea. It seems that there was an early Judean ministry and a later one, but all four Gospels’ chronologies must be harmonized in order to see this early Judean visit (i.e., John 2:13-4:3).

Why Jesus was baptized has always been a concern for believers because John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need forgiveness for He was sinless (cf. II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5).

The theories have been:

1. it was an example for believers to follow
2. it was His identification with believers’ need
3. it was His ordination and equipping for ministry
4. it was a symbol of His redemptive task

5. it was His approval of the ministry and message of John the Baptist
6. it was a prophetic foreshadowing of His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

Whatever the reason, this was a defining moment in Jesus' life. Although it does not imply that Jesus became the Messiah at this point, which is the early heresy of adoptionism (cf. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* by Bart D. Ehrman, pp. 47-118), it held great significance for Him.

#### 1:10

NASB, NKJV "immediately"

NRSV "just as"

TEV "as soon as"

NJB "at once"

This is a very common term in Mark. It characterizes his Gospel. Here *euthus* is translated "immediately" or "straightway" (cf. 1:10,12,18,20,21,20,28,42; 2:2,8,12; 3:6; 4:5,15,16,17,29; 5:5,29,42; 6:25,27,45, 50,54; 7:35; 8:10; 9:15,20,24; 10:52; 11:3; 14:43,45; 15:1).

This is the term that gives the Gospel of Mark its fast-paced, action-oriented feel, which would have appealed to Romans. This word group is used about 47 times in Mark (cf. *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* by Robert Bratcher and Eugene Nida, p. 29).

☐ **"coming up out of the water"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 63:11, where it originally would have referred to the Red Sea (i.e., a new exodus in Jesus, who would soon be tempted for forty days as Israel was for forty years). This verse cannot be used as a proof-text for immersion. In context it may imply coming out of the river, not coming from under the water.

☐ **"He saw"** This may imply that only Jesus saw and heard this Messianic affirmation. If so, this would fit into the recurrent theme of Mark's Messianic Secret. However, the other Gospels also record this event in a similar way (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22).

☐ **"heavens opening"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 64:1. This term means to rip open, which would have been a metaphor for tearing open the canopy above the earth (cf. Gen. 1:6).

☐ **"the Spirit like a dove"** The origin of this metaphor may be

1. the Spirit brooding over the water in Gen. 1:2
2. the birds Noah sent out of the Ark in Gen. 8:6-12
3. the rabbis' use of it as a symbol of the nation of Israel (cf. Ps. 68:13; 74:19)
4. a symbol of gentleness and peace (cf. Matt. 10:16)

One reason I personally am so committed to the historical-grammatical method of biblical interpretation, which focuses on authorial intent as expressed in the literary context, is the tricky or clever way ancient interpreters (as well as modern ones) manipulated the text to fit their preset theological structure. By adding the numerical value of the letters of the Greek word "dove" (*peristera*), which equals 801, one gets the same numerical value of the Greek words *alpha* (equals 1) and *omega* (equals 800), so the dove equals the eternal Christ Spirit. This is so clever, but it is isoetic, not exegetic!

☐ **"upon Him"** This is the PREPOSITION *eis* which means "into." It is not meant to imply that Jesus did not already have the Holy Spirit, but this was a special visible sign of the Spirit's empowerment for His assigned Messianic task. This may also be an allusion to fulfilled prophecy (cf. Isa. 63:11).

Mark uses the preposition "into" (*eis*), but Matthew and Luke use "upon" (*epi*). This is because Mark's Gospel, which has none of the birth narratives or visitations, begins Jesus' ministry with the baptismal event. This brevity was used by the heretical groups, Adoptionists and Gnostics, to assert that Jesus, a normal human, was supernaturally empowered with "the Christ Spirit" at this juncture and thereafter was able to do the miraculous. Later scribes, therefore, changed the preposition to "to" (*pros*).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: ADOPTIONISM

This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent Deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM

- A. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the gnostic writings of the second century. However, its ideas were present in the first century (Dead Sea Scrolls) and the Apostle John's writings.
- B. The problem at Ephesus (I Timothy), Crete (Titus) and Colossae was a hybrid of Christianity, incipient gnosticism, and legalistic Judaism.
- C. Some tenets of Valentinian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century
  - 1. Matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter.
  - 2. There are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the Old Testament, who formed the universe (*kosmos*).
  - 3. Jesus was an emanation, like YHWH, but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest, but still less than God and certainly not incarnate deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be divine. He appeared to be human, but was really only a spirit (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6).
  - 4. Salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.
- D. The gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems
  - 1. For some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*).
  - 2. For others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. In this book, the false teachers emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true salvation (cf. 2:16-23).
- E. A good reference book is *The Gnostic Religion* by Hans Jonas, published by Beacon Press.

**1:11 “a voice came out of the heavens”** The rabbis called the heavenly voice a *Bath Kol* (cf. 9:7), which was the method of affirming God's will during the interbiblical period when there was no prophet. This would have been a powerful divine affirmation to those familiar with rabbinical Judaism.

**▣ “You are My beloved Son”** These two titles unite the royal aspect of the Messiah (Ps. 2:7) to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isa. 42:1). The term “son” in the OT could refer to (1) the nation of Israel; (2) the King of Israel; or (3) the coming Davidic Messianic King. See Special Topic at 3:16.

Notice the three persons of the Trinity in v. 11: the Spirit, the voice from heaven, and the Son, the recipient of both.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

- A. the Gospels
  - 1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
  - 2. John 14:26
- B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- C. Paul
  - 1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
  - 2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
  - 3. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14

4. Gal. 4:4-6
5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
6. I Thess. 1:2-5
7. II Thess. 2:13
8. Titus 3:4-6
- D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
- E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

- A. Use of PLURALS for God
  1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
  2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
- B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity
  1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
  2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
  3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
  4. Zechariah 3:1-2
- C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, then Spirit

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, and was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
3. the doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

▣ **“My beloved”** This phrase is either (1) a title for the Messiah as in the NRSV, NJB, and Williams translations or (2) a descriptive phrase as in the NASB, NKJV, and TEV. In the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, this would be understood as “favorite” or even “only,” similar to John 3:16.

▣ **“in You I am well-pleased”** This descriptive phrase is paralleled in Matt. 3:17 and 17:5 (the Transfiguration). However, the descriptive phrase is missing in Mark 9:7 and Luke 9:35.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>Immediately the Spirit impelled Him *to go out into the wilderness*. <sup>13</sup>And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

**1:12-13** This account of the temptation of Jesus is so brief compared to Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. In these accounts the purpose of the temptation is clear: how would Jesus use His Messianic powers to accomplish His redemptive task (cf. James Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 39-46)? But what could Mark’s brief account mean? It is possible that Peter saw this event as a symbol of Jesus’ defeat of evil (i.e., by the empowering of the Spirit), a foreshadowing of the Passion Week. But this is only speculation. The text itself gives no clue except the event’s timing—just after Jesus’ (1) enduing by the Spirit and (2) affirmation by the Father, but before His public ministry. This is one of the three events mentioned before Jesus’ public ministry ([1] John’s ministry; [2] John’s baptism; and [3] Satan’s temptation).

**1:12 “Immediately”** See note at 1:10.

☐ **“the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness”** The term “impelled” is the strong term “throw out” (often used of exorcisms, cf. 1:34,39; 3:15,22,23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18,28,38). The Son’s temptation was by the agency of the evil one, but instigated by the Spirit (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). It was God’s will that Jesus be tested! I would like to recommend two good books on this topic, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus* by James S. Stewart and *Between God and Satan* by Helmut Thielicke.

In the OT the wilderness was a time of testing for Israel, but also a time of intimate fellowship. The rabbis called the wilderness wandering period the honeymoon between YHWH and Israel. Elijah and John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness. It was a place of seclusion for training, meditation, and preparation for active ministry. This period was crucial for Jesus’ preparation (cf. Heb. 5:8).

**1:13 “forty days”** This is used both literally and figuratively in the Bible. It denotes a long indeterminate period of time (i.e., longer than a lunar cycle, but shorter than a seasonal change).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE**

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
  - 1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
  - 2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
  - 3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
  - 4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
    - a. seven candlesticks, 1:12,20; 2:1
    - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
    - c. seven churches, 1:20
    - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
    - e. seven lamps, 4:5
    - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
    - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
    - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
    - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
    - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
    - k. seven thousand, 11:13
    - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
    - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
    - n. seven bowls, 15:7
    - o. seven kings, 17:10
    - p. seven vials, 21:9
  - 5. Ten – completeness
    - a. use in Gospels
      - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
      - (2) Mark 10:41
      - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
    - b. use in Revelation
      - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
      - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
      - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
    - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
      - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
      - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
  - 6. Twelve – human organization
    - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
    - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4

- c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
- d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
- e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
- f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
- g. use in Revelation
  - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
  - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
  - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
  - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
  - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
  - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
  - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 7. Forty – number for time
  - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
  - b. can be literal or symbolic
    - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
    - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
    - (3) divisions of Moses life:
      - (a) forty years in Egypt
      - (b) forty years in the desert
      - (c) forty years leading Israel
    - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
  - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 8. Seventy – round number for people
  - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
  - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
  - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
  - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
  - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
  - 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
  - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

▣ **“was being tempted”** This is an IMPERFECT PASSIVE PERIPHRASTIC linked to an IMPERFECT ACTIVE “to be” VERB. The term “tempt” (*peirazō*) has the connotation of “to test with a view toward destruction.” From the FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Matt. 4 (cf. 4:3,6) we learn that the temptation was over how to use His Messianic power to accomplish God's redemptive will.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR “TESTING” AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

There are two Greek terms which have the idea of testing someone for a purpose.

### 1. *Dokimazō, dokimion, dokimasia*

This term is a metallurgist term for testing the genuineness of something (i.e., metaphorically someone) by fire. The fire reveals the true metal and burning off (i.e., purifying) of the dross. This physical process became a powerful idiom for God and/or Satan and/or humans testing others. This term is used only in a positive sense of testing with a view towards acceptance. It is used in the NT of testing:

- a. oxen, Luke 14:19
- b. ourselves, I Cor. 11:28

- c. our faith, James 1:3
- d. even God, Heb. 3:9

The outcomes of these tests were assumed to be positive (cf. Rom. 1:28; 14:22; 16:10; II Cor. 10:18; 13:3; Phil. 2:27; I Pet. 1:7). Therefore, the term conveys the idea of someone examined and proved to be

- a. worthwhile
- b. good
- c. genuine
- d. valuable
- e. honored

## 2. *Peirazō, peirasmus*

This term often has the connotation of examination for the purpose of fault finding or rejection. It is often used in connection with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

- a. It conveys the attempt to trap Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18,35; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:38; Heb. 2:18).
- b. This term (*peirazō*) is used as a title for Satan in Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5.
- c. It is used by Jesus to not test God (cf. Matt. 14:7; Luke 4:12).
- d. It also denotes the attempt to do something that has failed (cf. Acts 9:20; 20:21; Heb. 11:29).
- e. It is used in connection with the temptations and trials of believers (cf. I Cor. 7:5; 10:9,13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 2:18; James 1:2,13,14; I Pet. 4:12; II Pet. 2:9). God allows the three enemies of mankind (i.e., the world, the flesh, and the devil) to manifest in a specific time and place.

▣ **“by Satan”** The Bible repeatedly asserts a personal, supernatural force of evil.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an archenemy of good, but a servant of YHWH, who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.
2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” (BDB 966) can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (cf. I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (cf. Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (cf. I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. *Book of Wisdom* 2:23-24; *II Enoch* 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in *I Enoch* 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. I Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isa. 14 and Ezek. 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an archangelic enemy of YHWH developed from the two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, and were then developed by the rabbis into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **“the wild beasts”** This is possibly a simple reference to an uninhabited area. However, because wild beasts are used as metaphors for or names of the demonic in the OT (cf. NEB) this could also refer to a place of demonic activity (cf. Ps. 22:12-13,16,21; Isa. 13:21-22; 34:11-15).

These wild beasts could also be a continuing allusion to the new exodus, the new age of restored fellowship between mankind and the animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25; Hos. 2:18). The Bible often describes the new age as a restoration of the Garden Eden (cf. Genesis 2; Rev. 21-22). The original image of God in mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is restored through Jesus’ sacrificial death. Full fellowship, which existed before the Fall (cf. Genesis 3), is possible again.

▣ **“angels were ministering to Him”** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE which means (1) ongoing action in past time or (2) the beginning of an activity in past time. Angels ministered to (1) Elijah in the wilderness in the same way (i.e., providing food, cf. I Kgs. 18:7-8). This may imply Jesus as the new prophetic voice (cf. Deut. 18:18-22) and (2) Israel in the wilderness, so too, to Jesus while in the wilderness. This may have implied Jesus as the new Moses paralleling his baptism and testing (cf. I Cor. 10:1-13).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:14-15**

<sup>14</sup>Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

**1:14-15** These two verses are a summary statement. Mark often uses this technique (cf. 1:14-15,21-22,39; 2:13; 3:7b-9; 6:7,12-13). These summaries convey several theological truths

1. Jesus was popular and many came to hear Him preach/teach
2. Jesus was powerful, exorcizing demons and healing people
3. He transferred His power to His disciples (i.e., the mission trips of the Twelve and the seventy)
4. the purpose of Jesus’ proclamation was repentance and faith

**1:14 “John had been taken into custody”** John was imprisoned (i.e., *paradidōmi*, which is used twenty times in Mark for “turned over to the authorities”) by Herod Antipas because he continued to publicly condemn Herod’s marriage to his brother’s ex-wife (cf. Mark 6:16-17).



## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FAMILY OF HEROD THE GREAT**

### **A. Herod the Great**

1. King of Judea (37-4 B.C., This refers to Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.), an Idumean (from Edom), who, through political maneuvering, managed to be appointed ruler of a large part of Palestine (Canaan) by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. by means of the support of Mark Antony.)
2. Recorded in Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5
3. His sons
  - a. Herod Philip (son of Mariamne of Simon)
    - (1) Husband of Herodias (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)
    - (2) Recorded in Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17
  - b. Herod Philip (son of Cleopatra)
    - (1) Tetrarch of area north and west of the Sea of Galilee (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)
    - (2) Recorded in Luke 3:1
  - c. Herod Antipas
    - (1) Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D. 39)
    - (2) Recorded in Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14,29; Luke 3:19; 9:7-9; 13:31; 23:6-12,15; Acts 4:27; 13:1
  - d. Archelaus, Herod the Ethnarch
    - (1) Ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 B.C. - A.D. 6)
    - (2) Recorded in Matt. 2:22
  - e. Aristobulus (son of Mariamne)
    - (1) Recorded as father of Herod Agrippa I who was
      - (a) King of Judea (A.D. 37-44)
      - (b) Recorded in Acts 12:1-24; 23:35
        - (i) his son was Herod Agrippa II
          - Tetrarch of northern territory (A.D. 50-70)
        - (ii) his daughter was Bernice
          - consort of her brother
          - Acts 25:13-26:32
        - (iii) his daughter was Drusilla
          - wife of Felix
          - Acts 24:24

### **B. Biblical References to the Herods**

1. Herod the Tetrarch who was mentioned in Matthew 14:1ff.; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31, and 23:7, was the son of Herod the Great. At the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided among several of his sons. The term “Tetrarch” meant “leader of the fourth part.” This Herod was known as Herod Antipas, which is the shortened form of Antipater. He controlled Galilee and Perea. This meant that much of Jesus’ ministry was in the territory of this second generation Idumean ruler.
2. Herodias was the daughter of Herod Antipas’ brother, Aristobulus. She had also been previously married to Philip, the half brother of Herod Antipas. This was not Philip the Tetrarch who controlled the area just north of Galilee, but the other brother Philip who lived in Rome. Herodias had one daughter by Philip. On Herod Antipas’ visit to Rome he met and was seduced by Herodias, who was looking for political advancement. Therefore, Herod Antipas divorced his wife, who was a Nabatean princess, and Herodias divorced Philip so that she and Herod Antipas could be married. She was also the sister of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12).
3. We learn the name of Herodias’ daughter, Salome, from Flavius Josephus in his book *The Antiquities of the Jews* 8:5:4. She must have been between the ages of twelve and seventeen at this point. She was obviously controlled and manipulated by her mother. She later married Philip the Tetrarch, but was soon widowed.
4. About ten years after the beheading of John the Baptist, Herod Antipas went to Rome at the instigation of his wife Herodias to seek the title of king because Agrippa I, her brother, had received that title. But Agrippa I wrote Rome and accused Antipas of corroboration with the Parthians, a hated enemy of Rome from the Fertile Crescent

(Mesopotamia). The Emperor apparently believed Agrippa I and Herod Antipas, along with his wife Herodias, was exiled to Spain.

5. It may make it easier to remember these different Herods as they are presented in the New Testament by remembering that Herod the Great killed the children in Bethlehem; Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist; Herod Agrippa I killed the Apostle James; and Herod Agrippa II heard Paul's appeal recorded in the book of Acts.
- C. Background Information on the Family of Herod the Great – for more information, consult the index of Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*.

▣ **“Jesus came into Galilee”** The Gospel records Jesus' ministry geographically in Galilee, in Judea, in Galilee, and in Judea. Jesus left southern Palestine when John was arrested (cf. Matt. 4:12; Luke 4:14-15; John 1:43). Ministry in the predominantly Gentile northern Palestine was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isa. 9. No one expected anything spiritually significant to begin in this region, far removed from the Temple (cf. John 1:46) and the first to be defeated and exiled by the Mesopotamian powers (i.e., Assyria and neo-Babylon).

▣ **“preaching the gospel of God”** This use of the term “gospel” must be qualified. At first Jesus' message was similar to John's. The full gospel of Jesus will not be complete until after His life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Verse 15 gives the content of Jesus' early preaching. What John preached was personally embodied in Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 14:6).

**1:15 “time is fulfilled”** This phrase is introduced by *hoti*, which usually denotes a quote and is common in Mark. This reflects Peter's memory of Jesus' words. This is PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which has prophetic/messianic significance (cf. Eph. 1:10; Gal. 4:4; I Tim. 2:6; Titus 1:3). The PASSIVE VOICE reflects God's activity in and control of time and history.

▣ **“the kingdom of God”** This refers to God's reign. It is both a present reality and a future consummation. In Matthew's Gospel this is usually referred to as “kingdom of heaven.” These phrases are synonymous (compare Matt. 13:11 with Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10). The kingdom arrived when Jesus was born. It is described and embodied in Jesus' life and teachings. It will be consummated at His return. It was the subject of Jesus' sermons and parables. It was the central theme of His spoken messages.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the OT YHWH was thought of as the King of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ps. 10:16; 24:7-9; 29:10; 44:4; 89:18; 95:3; Isa. 43:15; 44:4,6) and the Messiah as the ideal king (cf. Ps. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5). With the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (6-4 B.C.) the kingdom of God broke into human history with new power and redemption (new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-36). John the Baptist proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15). Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom was present in Himself and His teachings (cf. Matt. 4:17,23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11-12; 12:28; 16:19; Mark 12:34; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 12:31-32; 16:16; 17:21). Yet the kingdom is also future (cf. Matt. 16:28; 24:14; 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31; 22:16,18).

In the Synoptic parallels in Mark and Luke we find the phrase, “the kingdom of God.” This common topic of Jesus' teachings involved the present reign of God in human's hearts, which one day will be consummated over all the earth. This is reflected in Jesus' prayer in Matt. 6:10. Matthew, written to Jews, preferred the phrase that did not use the name of God (Kingdom of Heaven), while Mark and Luke, writing to Gentiles, used the common designation, employing the name of deity.

This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus' parables). In John's gospel “eternal life” is a key metaphor.

The tension with this phrase is caused by the two comings of Christ. The OT focused only on one coming of God's Messiah—a military, judgmental, glorious coming—but the NT shows that He came the first time as the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53 and the humble king of Zech. 9:9. The two Jewish ages, the age of wickedness and the new age of righteousness, overlap. Jesus currently reigns in the hearts of believers, but will one day reign over all creation. He will come like the OT predicted! Believers live in “the already” versus “the not yet” of the kingdom of God (cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

▣	
NASB, NKJV	“is at hand”
NRSV	“has come near”
TEV	“is near”
NJB	“is close at hand”

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies that the kingdom was a past reality (cf. vv. 1-3) as well as a current reality (cf. Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21). The phrase “the time is fulfilled” parallels this phrase and emphasizes the reality of God’s prophetic word now becoming a historical event. The “New Age of Righteousness” was inaugurated at Jesus’ birth, but not fully known until the Passion Week’s events and not fully empowered until Pentecost.

Although the Kingdom has truly come, there are also NT texts which imply that its complete manifestation is future (cf. 9:1; 14:25; Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:18; Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:13-18). What we do with Christ now determines our eschatological hope (cf. 8:38).

▣ “repent” See Special Topic on Repentance at 1:4.

▣ “and believe in the gospel” The parallels in Matt. (4:17) and Luke (4:14-15) do not have the same summary.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

(*PISTIS* [noun], *PISTEUŌ* [verb], *PISTOS* [adjective])

- A. This is such an important term in the Bible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6). It is the subject of Jesus’ early preaching (cf. Mark 1:15). There are at least two new covenant requirements: repentance and faith (cf. 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).
- B. Its etymology
  1. The term “faith” in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God’s nature, not ours.
  2. It came from a Hebrew term (*emun*, *emunah*), which meant “to be sure or stable.” Saving faith is mental assent (set of truths), moral living (a lifestyle), and primarily a relational (welcoming of a person) and volitional commitment (a decision) to that person.
- C. Its OT usage
 

It must be emphasized that Abraham’s faith was not in a future Messiah, but in God’s promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this promise by trusting in God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, which took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).
- D. Its NT usage
 

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*) which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the noun does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the verb is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).
- E. Its use with PREPOSITIONS
  1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
    - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
    - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 12:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
    - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
    - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
    - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
    - f. into Light (John 12:36)
    - g. into God (John 14:1)
  2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
  3. *epi* means “in” or upon, as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5,24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
  4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
  5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
    - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
    - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
    - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)

- d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
- e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
- f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
- g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
- h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
- i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, "I Am" (John 8:24; 13:19)
- j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
- k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." <sup>18</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup>Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

**1:16 "the Sea of Galilee"** This lake goes by several names in the Bible.

1. the Sea of Chinnereth (cf. Num. 34:11; Josh. 12:3; 13:27)
2. Lake of Gennesaret (cf. Luke 5:1)
3. Sea of Tiberias (cf. John 6:1; 21:1)
4. Sea of Galilee (most common, cf. 1:16; 7:31; Matt. 4:18; 15:29; John 6:1)

▣ **"Simon and Andrew. . .casting a net"** Notice Peter is the first officially called in Mark, while in John 1:35-42 it was Andrew. The Sea of Galilee supplied all of Palestine with fish. This net refers to hand nets, which were about 10 feet by 15 feet across. Fish were a main staple of the Jewish diet.

**1:17 "Follow Me"** This is an ADVERB functioning as an AORIST IMPERATIVE. This must not have been the first encounter between Jesus and these fishermen (cf. John 1:35ff). This is their call to be official, permanent followers of a rabbi (cf. vv. 17 and 20).

▣ **"I will make you become fishers of men"** This is a word play on their vocation. Fishing in the OT was often a metaphor for judgment (cf. Jer. 16:16. Ezek. 29:4-5; 38:4; Amos 4:2; Hab.1:14-17). Here it is a metaphor of salvation.

**1:18** This is repeated in Matt. 4:18-22, but a slightly different account is found in Luke 5:1-11.

**1:19-20 "boat"** These were large fishing boats. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were prosperous middle class fishermen (i.e., had hired servants). John apparently had business contracts to regularly sell fish to the priestly families in Jerusalem (i.e., John was known by them, cf. John 18:15-16).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:21-28**

<sup>21</sup>They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. <sup>22</sup>They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, <sup>24</sup>saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God!" <sup>25</sup>And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup>Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." <sup>28</sup>Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

**1:21 "Capernaum"** Jesus, because of the city of Nazareth's lack of faith (cf. Luke 4:16-30) and as a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Matt. 4:13-16), took this city as His headquarters (cf. 2:1). Ministry in the city of Capernaum (cf. 1:21-3:6) is used to depict

typical activity of Jesus. These events reveal clearly His authority, power, and Messiahship. This is like a glimpse into the daily life and activity of Jesus during this entire period of public ministry.

▣ **“immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“Sabbath”** Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH**

This is from the Hebrew word meaning “rest” or “cessation.” It is connected to the seventh day of creation where God ceased His labor after finishing initial creation (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). God did not rest because He was tired, but because (1) creation was complete and good (cf. Gen. 1:31) and (2) to give mankind a regular pattern for worship and rest. The Sabbath begins like all the days of Gen. 1, at twilight; therefore, twilight on Friday to twilight on Saturday was the official time period. All the details of its observance are given in Exodus (especially chapters 16,20,31, and 35) and Leviticus (especially chapters 23-26). The Pharisees had taken these regulations and, by their oral discussions, interpreted them to include many rules. Jesus often performed miracles, knowingly violating their picky rules so as to enter into a dialogue with them. It was not the Sabbath that Jesus rejected or belittled, but their self-righteous legalism and lack of love.

▣ **“synagogue”** This is from a compound word which literally means “to come together.” It was Jesus’ custom to attend worship regularly. The synagogue developed in Mesopotamia during the Babylonian Exile. It was a place of worship, education, and cultural preservation. It was the local expression of the Jewish faith, as the Temple was the national expression. There was at least one synagogue in every town with at least ten Jewish men.

▣ **“began to teach”** It was customary for someone from the congregation or a distinguished guest to be chosen to lead the teaching part of the worship service. Usually a passage from the Torah (i.e., Genesis – Deuteronomy) was read and a passage from the Prophets (i.e., Joshua – Kings and Isaiah – Malachi).

**1:22,27 “amazed”** Literally this meant “struck to attention.” Jesus’ teaching style and content were radically different from that of the rabbis. They quoted one another as authorities, but He spoke with God’s authority (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). Jesus’ teachings and actions caused amazement, astonishment, and even fear (cf. 1:22,27; 2:12; 5:42; 6:2,51; 7:37; 9:6,15; 10:26,32; 11:18; 14:33).

**1:22 “not as the scribes”** Jesus did not quote oral tradition (i.e., Talmud). The Jews were concerned that they might break God’s commands, so every verse of the Torah (the writings of Moses, Genesis - Deuteronomy) was interpreted by rabbinical discussions. Later these developed into schools, one liberal (i.e., Hillel) and one conservative (i.e., Shammai). The leading rabbis of these two ancient schools were often quoted as authorities. The scribes were the professional teachers of Judaism who interpreted the oral tradition to local situations and needs. Most scribes in Jesus’ day were Pharisees.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SCRIBES**

The title comes from the Hebrew NOUN (BDB 706) which means “a spoken message,” “a written document/decreed.” The Greek translation “grammateus” usually refers to a written message. It can denote

1. educator (Nehemiah 8)
2. governmental official ( II Kgs. 22:3-13)
3. recorder/secretary (I Chr. 24:6; II Chr. 34:13; Jer. 36:22)
4. military officer (cf. Jdgs. 5:14)
5. religious leader (Ezra 7:6; Neh. 12:12-13)

In the NT they are often associated with the Pharisees. In a sense they were people who were educated in the OT and the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud). They helped interpret and apply the Jewish traditions to everyday life (cf. Sirah 39:6). However, their righteousness (i.e., Jewish legalism and ritual) could not bring peace with God (cf. Matt. 5:20; Rom. 3:19-20; 9:1-5,30-32; 10:1-6; col. 2:20-22).

They were often depicted in the Synoptic gospels (John never mentions them, 8:3 not original), as opposed to Jesus, although some did respond to Him (cf. Matt. 8:19).

1. conflict over eating with sinners and tax-collectors, Mark 2:16; Matt. 9:9-13
2. conflict over the source of Jesus’ authority in exorcisms, Mark 3:22
3. conflict over Jesus forgiving sin, Matt. 9:3; Luke 5:21

4. demand for a spectacular sign, Matt. 12:38
5. conflict over hand washing (i.e., ceremonial washings), Matt. 15:1-2; Mark 7:1-5
6. conflict over the crowds' affirmation at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Matt. 21:15
7. Jesus' accusation of their motives (i.e., seeking honor and preeminence), Matt. 12:38-40
8. Jesus' accusing them of being hypocrites and blind guides in Moses' seat, Matt. 23:1-36

Because of their knowledge of Scripture, they should have been the first to recognize and embrace Jesus, but their traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13; 6:9-10) had blinded them! When light becomes darkness, how great is the darkness!

**1:23 “man. . .with an unclean spirit”** This was a case of demon possession (cf. v. 34). Notice he was still in worship, keeping up appearances. The NT makes a distinction between physical illness and demon possession, although they often had the same symptoms. In these cases the demon controls the person. The person has lost his own will. The Jewish worldview assumed the presence of spiritual beings, good (cf. Mark 1:13; Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15; II Kgs. 6:17) and evil (cf. 1:23,26,27; 3:11,20; 5:2,8,13; 6:7; 7:25), who affected people's lives.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (i.e., unclean spirits)**

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed human personality traits to forces of nature, animals, and natural objects. Life was explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.
  1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
  2. Egypt, order and function
  3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright's *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92
- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.
  1. *Se'ir* (satyrs or hairy demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
  2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
  3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15,18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
  4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
  5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
  6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)  
(These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)

However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zech. 3), not an independent, self-directing enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons.

Judaism's theology of personified evil is explained and well documented in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

1. Satan or Sammael
2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

- E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18) or (2) evil spirits (cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2), from human beings. Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift, nor is a methodology or procedure for it given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor its purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.
- G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's world-view. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Balthmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud). Its influence is pervasive, but defeated. Believers need to walk in the victory of Christ!

#### 1:24

NASB "What business do we have with each other"  
NKJV "What have we to do with You"  
NRSV "What have you to do with us"  
TEV, NJB "What do you want with us"

This is literally "what to us and to you." In *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* Bratcher and Nida note that "In classical Greek the phrase would mean 'what have we in common?' Here, however, it corresponds to the Hebrew 'Why do you meddle with me'" (p. 49). This idiom is illustrated in Judges 11:12; II Sam. 16:10; 19:22; I Kgs. 17:18; II Chr. 35:12.

▣ "Jesus of Nazareth" See note at 10:47.

▣ "Have You come to destroy us" Grammatically this could be either a question or a statement. This was an OT idiom of hostility (cf. Judg. 11:12; II Sam. 16:10; 19:22; I Kgs. 17:18; II Kgs. 3:13; II Chr. 35:21). Evil knows it will one day be judged!

▣ "the Holy One of God" This was an OT Messianic title. This was not a voluntary confession but a calculated attempt to cause trouble for Jesus. Jesus was later accused of receiving power from Satan (cf. Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE

"The Holy One" can refer to

1. God the Father (cf. numerous OT passages on "the Holy One of Israel")
2. God the Son (cf. Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 3:14)
3. God the Spirit (His title, "Holy Spirit" cf. John 1:33; 14:26; 20:22).

Acts 10:38 is a verse where all three persons of the Godhead are involved in anointing. Jesus was anointed (cf. Luke 4:18; Acts 4:17; 10:38). Here the concept is widened to include all believers (cf. I John 2:27). The Anointed One has become the anointed ones! This may be parallel to Antichrist and antichrists (cf. I John 2:18). The OT symbolic act of physical anointing with oil (cf. Exod. 29:7; 30:25; 37:29) relates to those who were called and equipped by God for a special task (i.e., ; prophets, priests, and kings). The word "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew term "the anointed one" or Messiah.

1:25 "Jesus rebuked him" Mark uses this VERB often: (1) sometimes of demons (cf. 1:25; 3:2; 9:25); (2) of the wind and sea (cf. 4:39); and (3) of His own disciples (cf. 8:30,33; 10:13).

▣ "Be quiet" This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE meaning "be muzzled" (cf. 4:39). Jesus' two commands directed at the demon are strong terms with negative connotations.

▣ "come out of him" This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: EXORCISM

Exorcisms were common in Jesus' day, but Jesus' methods were radically different. His exorcisms were a sign of the New Age. The rabbis used magic formulas (see Alfred Edersheim, *the Life and Times of Jesus, The Messiah*, vol. 2, Appendix XIII, pp. 748-763; XVI, pp. 770-776), but Jesus used His own authority. There is so much confusion and bad information circulating today about exorcism and the demonic. Part of this problem is that the NT does not discuss these issues. As a pastor I wish I had more information on this subject. Here are some books I trust.

1. *Christian Counseling and the Occult*, Kurt E. Koch
2. *Demons in the World Today*, Merrill F. Unger
3. *Biblical Demonology*, Merrill F. Unger
4. *Principalities and Powers*, John Warwick Montgomery
5. *Christ and the Powers*, Hendrik Berkhof
6. *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton Anton

It surprises me that exorcism is not listed as one of the spiritual gifts and that the subject is not addressed in the Apostolic letters. I believe in a biblical world view which includes the spiritual realm (i.e., good and evil), present and active in the physical realm (i.e., Job 1-2; Daniel 10; Eph. 6:10-18). However, God has chosen not to reveal the specifics. As believers we have all the information we need to live godly, productive lives for Him! But some subjects are not revealed or developed.

**1:26** Several physical manifestations of an unclean spirit leaving a person are recorded (cf. 1:26; 9:26; and Luke 9:39). This may have been a way of confirming that the spirit had truly left.

This first sign of power clearly shows the Messianic implications of Jesus. The OT title (cf. Ps. 16:10) by which the demons acknowledge Him and His power to control and judge them clearly reflects the spiritual authority of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. v. 27c). This account is paralleled in Luke 4:31-37.

**1:27 “What is this? A new teaching with authority”** This Greek word for “new” (i.e., *kainos*) means “new in point of quality,” not “new in point of time.” The phrase “with authority” can refer to Jesus' teaching (cf. Matt. 7:29; NASB, NRSV, NJB) or to Jesus' commanding (cf. Luke 4:36; NKJV, TEV). Since Luke 4:36 is a direct parallel, the second option seems best.

The source of Jesus' authority would become the central issue between Jesus and the Jewish leaders (cf. 11:28; Matt. 21:23; Luke 20:2). They could not deny His power so they impugned its source. This is the unpardonable sin!

**1:28 “immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“the news about Him spread everywhere”** Such a public exorcism would have been told and retold repeatedly.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:29-31

<sup>29</sup>And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup>And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

**1:30 “Simon's mother-in-law”** This shows that Peter was married. His wife is never mentioned in the NT. She may have been dead, but I Cor. 9:5 implies she traveled with Peter. This account is paralleled in Luke 4:31-37 and Matt. 8:14-17.

▣ **“was lying sick”** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE which shows continuous action in past time. She had been sick for some time.

▣ **“with a fever”** This literally means “fever-stricken.” This is a PRESENT TENSE, which implies an ongoing problem. Notice this illness was not linked to demon possession (cf. v. 32). Jesus' power over sickness is another sign of His person and Messianic mission. As often in the Gospels Jesus' miracles were as much for the disciples as for the recipient. Jesus is clearly revealing Himself to His newly chosen Apostles. Here He acts in compassion on the Sabbath. This would have been shocking to these Jewish men.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:32-34

<sup>32</sup>When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup>And the whole city had gathered at the door. <sup>34</sup>And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.



**1:32 “When evening came”** Apparently this was after twilight, so the Sabbath was officially over and physical healings were now rabbinically legal.

▣ **“bringing to Him”** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE which means “continually carrying.” Jesus did not want to be known as a miracle worker, but a proclaimer of truth (cf. Luke 4:43), yet the word was out (cf. v. 28).

▣ **“ill”** Verse 32 implies that “all” who were sick or demon possessed in the entire town were brought to Jesus. Verse 34 states that He healed or delivered “many” of them, but not everyone. It is interesting that the terms “all” and “many” are often used synonymously in the Bible (cf. Isaiah 53:6 vs. 53:11,12 and Rom. 5:18. vs. 19). It is uncertain whether Jesus healed everyone brought to Him or many of them. At the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, it is recorded that Jesus only healed one of many sick persons. Jesus did not go out of His way to heal, but if the situation presented itself (i.e., a teaching moment for the disciples plus Jesus’ compassion for the hurting and needy) He acted in power. He did go out of His way for the purpose of evangelism (i.e., the Samaritan woman, cf John 4, especially v. 4). Healing was a sign, but evangelism was the purpose and focus of His ministry.

There is some confusion about Jesus’ methodology in healing; sometimes it is dependent on the faith response of the sick person, sometimes on the faith of one of their friends or loved ones and often for the purpose of showing His power, unrelated to faith on the receiver’s part. Salvation did not automatically accompany physical deliverance or healing.

▣ **“these who were demon possessed”** Notice the distinction between illness and demon possession.

**1:33** These townspeople were curious and some were desperate for physical health and spiritual wholeness.

**1:34 “He healed many”** This verse is the first of many in Mark (cf. 1:34,43-44; 3:12; 4:11; 5:43; 7:24,36; 8:26,30; 9:9) which have often been referred to as “Mark’s Messianic Secret.” Jesus tells the disciples and those He heals not to tell about His healing acts. Jesus did not want to be known merely as a healer or miracle worker. These were only signs that pointed to His Messiahship, which at this point in His life had not been fully revealed. Jesus came to (1) reveal the Father; (2) give Himself as a sacrifice for sin; and (3) give believers an example to follow. The healings and deliverances were only signs of His compassion for the weak, sick, and outcast. This was also an OT predicted sign of the ministry of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 61:1).

▣ **“was not permitting the demons to speak”** This is IMPERFECT TENSE, implying several exorcisms (cf. v. 24). See Special Topic on the Demonic at 1:24.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:35-39**

<sup>35</sup>In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions searched for Him; <sup>37</sup>they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." <sup>39</sup>And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

**1:35 “In the early morning, while it was still dark”** This refers to last watch of the night, sometime between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m.

▣ **“was praying there”** This is IMPERFECT TENSE which shows Jesus’ regular prayer life. In Luke’s Gospel this emphasis is often repeated. In Mark there are only three examples of Jesus praying: here, the feeding of the five thousand (cf. 8:6), and in Gethsemane (cf. 14:32-42).

**1:37-39** The people were looking for Jesus because He healed them, not because of His teaching (cf. Luke 4:43). Jesus was continually on the move because (1) He wanted all to hear His message and (2) His mission was misunderstood.

**1:38**

NASB	“for that is what I came for”
NKJV	“because for this purpose I have come forth”
NRSV	“for that is what I came out to do”
TEV, NJB	“because that is why I came”

Jesus felt deeply that He had been sent (cf. Luke 4:43) to proclaim the gospel of God (cf. 1:14-15). He sensed that He was not sent as a miracle worker or healer, but as the establisher of a new day, a new relationship with the Father, the inauguration of the kingdom of God! The centrality of His person, the content of His message, His redemptive acts, and His glorious resurrection and ascension were the focus of His message. Mark’s Messianic Secret is a literary way of asserting that these things would not be fully understood or revealed until years in the future.

**1:39** There is a textual variant in v. 39. Some ancient Greek manuscripts have “he went” (cf.  $\aleph$ , B, L, the Palestinian Syriac, and the Coptic translations, also NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB), while the Greek uncial manuscripts A, C, D, W, the Vulgate, and Peshitta translations as well as the Greek text used by Augustine have “he was” (cf. NKJV). *The Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce Metzger, pp. 75-76, asserts that a copyist changed “he went” to match Luke 4:44. This is a good example of the fact that most Greek manuscript variations make no significant theological or historical difference as to the overall meaning of the account.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:40-45**

<sup>40</sup>And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." <sup>41</sup>Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." <sup>42</sup>Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. <sup>43</sup>And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, <sup>44</sup>and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." <sup>45</sup>But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

**1:40 “a leper”** This is paralleled in Matt. 8:2-4 and Luke 5:12-16. Judaism saw leprosy as an illness inflicted by God (cf. II Chr. 26:16-21). Contact with the leper would make one ceremonially unclean. This disease meant total social alienation! It is culturally surprising that this socially ostracized person approached Jesus and that Jesus would touch him (cf. v. 41). The OT disease called leprosy, discussed in Lev. 13-14, describes many types of skin diseases, all of which excluded one from worship.

▣ **“on his knees”** In Luke 5:12 it says he fell prostrate before Jesus. Jesus was not like the other rabbis. He took time to care for the outcast and ostracized.

▣ **“If you are willing, You can make me clean”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action. He was not doubting Jesus’ power (i.e., the leper calls Jesus “Lord” in Matt. 8:2), but His desire to act.

**1:41 “Moved with compassion”** Jesus cares for humanity made in the image of God. The Western Text, MS D, has “indignant,” but MSS  $\aleph$ , A, B, and C have “pity.” The words are similar in Aramaic. Although the oldest and best manuscripts have “pity” the most unusual reading would have been “indignant” or “angry.” See Appendix Two on Textual Criticism. There are several other places in Mark where Jesus’ anger is recorded in unexpected contexts (cf. 1:43; 3:5 and 10:14; also one in John 11:33, 38). His anger may have been directed at the disease or the evil of this age.

Mark portrays Jesus as fully human, feeling and expressing the full range of human emotions, for Himself as well as others.

1. pity or anger (1:41; 3:5)
2. physical hunger (2:25)
3. deep sigh (7:34, 8:12)
4. indignance/sternness (10:14)
5. love (10:21)
6. grief/trouble (10:33-34)
7. desertion (15:34)
8. thirst (15:36)

▣ **“touched him”** This was a ceremonial “no! no!” Jesus touching people is a common occurrence in the Gospels (cf. 7:33; 8:22; 10:13; also several times people touched Jesus, e.g. 3:10; 5:22-28,30,31; 6:56) as a gesture of personal care and concern.

▣ **“be cleansed”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus heals with the same personal authority by which He expels demons.

**1:43 “sternly warned him”** Literally this is “snorted,” which means an inarticulate groan. This reflects Mark’s Messianic Secret. The Gospel was not yet finished, and the message was still incomplete. Jesus did not want to be known as a miracle worker.

▣ **“immediately sent him away”** This is the same strong word used of the Spirit driving Jesus into wilderness (cf. Mark 1:12).

**1:44 “offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded”** This requirement related to the healing of leprosy (cf. Lev. 13, 14; Deut. 24:8). Jesus did not reject the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-19), but the oral traditions that had developed within Judaism (cf. Matt. 5:21-48). Possibly this was also for a witness to the priests.

**1:45 “proclaim”** This is a PRESENT INFINITIVE. This was in direct disobedience to Jesus’ strong request (cf. vv. 43-44).

▣ “**stayed out in unpopulated areas**” This referred to the uninhabited pasture lands like v. 3.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Mark begin with John the Baptist's ministry? Who does he represent?
2. Does baptism impart or symbolize forgiveness?
3. Why was Jesus baptized? Was He sinful and in need of repentance?
4. Where in this section is evidence for the Trinity implied?
5. Why was Jesus tempted? In what areas of His life did the temptation come?
6. Is God's kingdom here or is it future?
7. Does Mark 1 describe the first encounter between Jesus and the fishermen?
8. Why were the people in the synagogue in Capernaum so surprised at Jesus' teaching?
9. Is demon possession a reality or a cultural superstition?
10. Why did the demons reveal who Jesus really was?
11. Why is cleansing the leper so significant?
12. Why did Jesus command the leper to tell no one what had happened to him?

# MARK 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing of a Paralytic 2:1-12	Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic 2:1-12	Healing a Paralytic 2:1-12	Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man 2:1-5 2:6-7 2:8-11 2:12	Cure of a Paralytic 2:1-12
The Calling of Levi 2:13-17	Matthew the Tax Collector 2:13-17	The Call of Levi 2:13-14 2:15-17	Jesus Calls Levi 2:13-14 2:15-16 2:17	The Call of Levi 2:13-14 Eating With Sinners 2:15-17
The Questions about Fasting 2:18-20 2:21-22	Jesus is Questioned about Fasting 2:18-22	Fasting 2:18-20 2:21-22	The Question about Fasting 2:18 2:19-20 2:21-22	A Discussion of Fasting 2:18-22
Plucking Grain on the Sabbath 2:23-28	Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath 2:23-28	Jesus and Sabbath Laws 2:23-28	The Question about the Sabbath 2:23-24 2:25-26 2:27-28	Picking Corn on the Sabbath 2:23-26 2:27-28

### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 2:1-3:6 relates four incidents during the preaching tour spoken of in 1:38-39.
  - 1. a healing (2:1-12)
  - 2. a reaching out to an ostracized group (2:13-17)
  - 3. a question about fasting (2:18-20)
  - 4. a controversy over the oral tradition (2:23-38)
- B. Chapter 2:1-3:6 is a literary unit that shows the expanding opposition to Jesus from the religious status quo. Jesus Himself acted in opposition to the Oral Tradition (i.e., Talmud) in order to initiate a theological dialog with the religious leaders. Notice the repetition of “why” (vv. 7,16,18,24).
- C. Parallels
  - 1. 2:1-12 — Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 5:12-26
  - 2. 2:13-17 — Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32
  - 3. 2:18-22 — Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39
  - 4. 2:23-25 — Matt. 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5
- D. Jesus came to reveal the Father. Judaism had veiled Him in rituals and rules. Jesus exposes the religious leaders’ bias and agenda in His conflicts with them recorded in Mark. These issues define the differences between rabbinical Judaism and Jesus’ new covenant freedom and true religion.
  - 1. Jesus’ authority to forgive sin (2:1-12)
  - 2. the necessity of fasting (2:18-22)
  - 3. the necessity of keeping the Sabbath rules (2:23-28)
  - 4. the necessity of the ceremonial laws (7:1-8)
  - 5. the issue of divorce (10:2-9)
  - 6. paying taxes to Rome (12:13-17)
  - 7. the nature of the resurrection (12:18-27)
  - 8. the chief commandment (12:28-34)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-12

<sup>1</sup>When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. <sup>2</sup>And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup>And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup>Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup>And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup>But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup>Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? <sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup>"I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." <sup>12</sup>And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

**2:1 “Capernaum”** The name means “village of Nahum.” Because of the unbelief of the people in Nazareth, Jesus chose this town in Galilee (cf. Matt. 4:13) as His headquarters. It was located on a major caravan route from Damascus to Egypt. For further discussion see *Cities of the Biblical World* by Moine F. DeVries, pp. 269-275.

▣ **“it was heard”** Jesus’ reputation caused many people to come and see Him (i.e., the sick, the curious, the true seekers, and the religious leaders). Jesus’ words are often addressed to different groups in the audience, but to which group is not usually recorded.

▣ **“He was at home”** Whether this was Peter’s or Mary’s house or a rent house is uncertain.

**2:2 “many were gathered”** In eastern societies an open door meant “come on in,” and they did.

▣ **“there was no longer any room even around the door”** There may have been a small courtyard, but even so, this home would not hold a lot of people.

▣ **“He was speaking the word to them”** This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which can be understood as (1) the beginning of an act or (2) the repeating of an act. The “word” refers to Jesus’ recurring message stated in 1:14-15. His signs and actions changed, but the central core of His message remained the same.

**2:3 “a paralytic”** This is a compound of “to loose” and “along side.” Possibly this was a stroke victim, paralyzed on one side. Jesus’ actions had a twin purpose: (1) to fulfill the Messianic prophecy of Isa. 61:6 and (2) to proclaim His deity and authority by forgiving sin. For those who had spiritual eyes this was a clear, unambiguous sign!

**2:4 “removed the roof”** This is literally “they unroofed the roof.” Roofs were accessible from the street and were often the place of social gatherings. They were usually flat and made of mud and branches with grass. Luke 5:19 has “tiles” which might imply a courtyard. Can you imagine Jesus trying to teach while pieces of the roof fell on all of them?

▣ **“pallet”** This was a small straw mat used for sleeping.

**2:5 “their faith”** Jesus saw the faith of the friends as well as the paralytic’s faith and acted on their belief.

▣ **“your sins are forgiven”** This was probably or possibly an intentional provocation to the religious leaders who were present. Jesus was also encouraging this man’s faith. The Jews believed there was a relationship between illness and sin (cf. Job; John 9:2; James 5:15-16). This man may have been concerned that his sin was somehow involved in his paralysis.

The UBS<sup>4</sup> text has a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Some Greek texts have a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. P<sup>88</sup>, א, A, C, D, L, W), which is like Luke 5:20. However, Matt. 9:2 and MS B have a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. It is hard to choose which of these two options is original.

**2:6 “scribes”** These were experts on the oral and written Law. They were either (1) an official delegation from Jerusalem sent to keep an eye on Jesus or (2) local interpreters of the Jewish traditions for the townspeople. They must have come early to get into the house or they expected to be allowed to move to the front because of their social status. See Special Topic: Scribes at 1:22.



NASB, NKJV    **“reasoning in their hearts”**  
NRSV           **“questioning in their hearts”**  
TEV, NJB       **“thought to themselves”**

The theological question is did Jesus read their thoughts, thus showing another evidence of His deity (cf. I Sam. 16:7; Ps. 7:9; 139:1-4; Prov. 16:2; 21:2; 24:12; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 15:8; Heb. 4:12), or did He know their traditions and see their facial expressions?

This itself (cf. v. 8) may have been another sign. The rabbis interpreted Isa. 11:3 as the Messiah being able to discern people’s thoughts.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART**

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Corinthians 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
  - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
  - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)

6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
  - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart," also notice Hosea 11:8-9
  - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
  - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
  - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
  - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

**2:7 "He is blaspheming"** The penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning (cf. Lev. 24:16). Jesus was guilty of this charge unless He was deity. Jesus' forgiving sin is also a not-so-subtle claim to deity or at least being a representative of divine power and authority.

▣ **"who can forgive sins but God alone"** Jesus' message of repentance and faith (cf. 1:14-15) was predicated on the assumption of the sinfulness of all humans (even the OT covenant people, cf. Rom. 3:9-18). Sin is serious and has not only a temporal fellowship aspect, but an eternal eschatology aspect. Sin, and its power and consequences, is why Jesus came (cf. 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

Only God can forgive sin because sin is primarily against Him (cf. Gen. 20:6; 39:9; II Sam. 12:13; Ps. 41:4; 51:4). Since the book of Isaiah is a recurrent reference (or allusion) in Mark's Gospel here are some verses in Isaiah that deal with the new age and forgiveness: 1:18; 33:24; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22. This is another Messianic sign.

**2:8,12 "Immediately"** See note at 1:10.

▣ **"Jesus, aware"** See note at v. 7.

▣ **"in His spirit"** The Greek uncial manuscripts of the NT did not have

1. space between the words
2. punctuation marks
3. capitalization (all letters were capitals)
4. verse and chapter divisions

Therefore, only context can determine the need for capitals. Usually capitals are used for

1. names for deity
2. place names
3. personal names

The term "spirit" can refer to:

1. the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:5)
2. the conscious personal aspect of humanity (cf. 8:12; 14:38)
3. some being of the spiritual realm (i.e., unclean spirits, cf. 1:23).

In this context it refers to Jesus as a person.

I personally reject the theological concept of humans having three aspects (body, soul, and spirit based on I Thess. 5:23). Usually those who assert this concept turn this theological assumption into a hermeneutical grid by which all biblical texts are interpreted. These categories become airtight compartments by which God relates to humans. Humans are a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity see Frank Stagg's *Polarities of Man's Existence in a Biblical Perspective* and Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology* (second edition) pp. 538-557.

**2:9,11 "Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk"** These are two AORIST IMPERATIVES followed by a PRESENT IMPERATIVE. This was an instantaneous and lasting cure. It was done for three reasons.

1. because Jesus cared for the needy man and rewarded his and his friends' faith
2. to continue to teach the disciples the gospel as it relates to His person and mission
3. to continue to confront and dialog with the religious leaders

These religious leaders have only two options: believe in Him or explain away His power and authority.

**2:10 "the Son of Man"** This was an adjectival phrase from the OT. It was used in Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4 in its true etymological meaning of "human being." However, it was used in Dan. 7:13 in a unique context which implied both the humanity and deity

of the person addressed by this new eschatological royal title (cf. Mark 8:38; 9:9; 13:26; 14:26). Since this title was not used by rabbinical Judaism and therefore had none of the nationalistic, exclusivistic, militaristic implications, Jesus chose it as the perfect title of both veiling and revealing His dual nature, fully man and fully divine (cf. I John 4:1-3). It was His favorite self-designation. It is used thirteen times in Mark (often in relation to Jesus' various sufferings, cf. 8:31; 9:12,31; 10:33,45; 14:21,41).

☐ **“has authority on earth to forgive sins”** Jesus performed this miracle for the purpose of witnessing to these scribes. This issue of authority (i.e., *exousia*) will become the focal issue. They cannot deny His power, so they will assert that His power and authority is demonic or Satanic in origin (cf. Matt. 10:25; 12:24-29; Luke 11:14-22).

**2:12 “they were all amazed”** This was not because of the healing; they had seen Him do that earlier, but for the forgiving of sins! They (the scribes and Pharisees) had their sign. Jesus clearly showed His power and authority. I wonder if these leaders were “glorifying God” on this occasion also.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:13-14**

<sup>13</sup>And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. <sup>14</sup>As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.

**2:13 “all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them”** These are two IMPERFECT TENSE VERBS. Jesus always had time to teach the gospel and care for people. This is why the common people loved Him so much. He was so different from the judgmental, exclusivistic, religious leaders.

**2:14 “Levi”** The name in Hebrew means “a companion.” It was the name of the priestly tribe of Israel. Jesus may have changed this man's name to “Matthew,” which means “gift of YHWH” (cf. 3:18; Matt. 9:9) or, like Paul, his parents gave him two names at birth.

☐ **“sitting in the tax booth”** Tax collecting was a profession the Jewish population despised because it was purchased from the Roman authorities. Tax collectors had to levy a certain tax on all goods for Rome. Herod Antipas would also get part of the tax collected. Anything above the set amount which they collected, they kept as their salary. Tax collecting was noted for its high incidence of fraud. Levi was probably collecting the tax on fish exports.

☐ **“Follow Me”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This was an official call to discipleship (cf. 1:17,20). It must be remembered that the rabbis called disciples to bind themselves to the Law, but Jesus called these men to bind themselves to Him. Jesus, not human performance of Mosaic rules (i.e., the Talmud), is the way of salvation. Repentance is not a turning back to the Mosaic Law, but a turning to Jesus, YHWH's Messiah. Jesus did not reject the Law, but put Himself in its traditional place and as its only proper interpretation (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). Salvation is a person, not just a creed or the performance of a code. This issue is basically the reason Jesus came into purposeful conflict with the religious leaders.

In his book *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings*, Robert H. Stein makes a good point about this statement:

“Although the term ‘totalitarian’ has many negative connotations, Archibald M. Hunter's use of this term is an accurate one and describes well the total commitment that Jesus demanded of his followers. On the lips of anyone else the claims of Jesus would appear to be evidence of gross egomania, for Jesus clearly implies that the entire world revolves around himself and that the fate of all men is dependent on their acceptance or rejection of him. . . According to Jesus, the fate of man centers around him. Rejection of him means eternal judgment; acceptance of him means acceptance by God. The pivotal point of history and salvation, Jesus claims, is himself. To obey him is to be wise and escape judgment, but to reject his words is to be foolish and perish, for his words are the only sure foundation upon which to build (MATT. 7:24-27)” (p. 118).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:15-17**

<sup>15</sup>And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. <sup>16</sup>When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>17</sup>And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

**2:15 “He was reclining at the table in his house”** This was Levi's home (cf. Luke 5:29). Jesus ate with the socially and religiously outcast as a way to initiate a religious dialog with them. They flocked to Him because He acted so different from the



self-righteous Jewish leaders. Eating was a special event in the Ancient Near East which expressed friendship and acceptance. They would have reclined on their left elbow around a low horseshoe-shaped table with their feet behind them (this has been challenged by J. Jeremias in his book *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, pp. 20-21. He asserts that Jews did not regularly follow the Mediterranean custom of reclining, except during feast days). In the Near East others who were not invited to the meal could come into the dining area and stand around the walls or at the door or windows and listen to the conversation.

One wonders how much eschatological symbolism should be read into this context. Is this feast a foreshadowing of the Messianic banquet which will include outcasts (cf. Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29 possibly reflecting Isa. 59:15b-21)? If so, then there is the theological insight that temporal fellowship with Jesus mirrors eschatological kingdom fellowship. Sinners are reconciled now and in eternity! All sinners are welcome (and all are sinners, even the OT covenant people, cf. Rom. 3:9-18).

▣ **“sinners”** This refers to those people who did not keep all the details of the Oral Traditions (i.e., the Talmud). They were often referred to in a derogatory sense as the “people of the land.” They were not fully welcome at the synagogue.

▣ **“and His disciples”** These select men were privy to all of Jesus’ words and deeds. In truth they were primarily meant for them. They would record and explain Jesus to the world.

▣ **“for there were many of them, and they were following Him”** The grammar is ambiguous, but seems to refer to “sinners” and not to His disciples.

**2:16 “the scribes of the Pharisees”** Scribes were not exclusively of one religious/political party, though most of them in Jesus’ day were Pharisees. The Pharisees were a particular theological sect of Judaism which developed during the Maccabean period. They were very committed and sincere religionists who strictly followed the Oral Traditions (i.e., the Talmud).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES

- I. The term had one of the following possible origins.
  - A. “To be separate.” This group developed during the Macabean period. (This is the most widely accepted view).
  - B. “To divide.” This is another meaning of the same Hebrew root. Some say it meant an interpreter (cf. II Tim. 2:15).
  - C. “Persian.” This is another meaning of the same Aramaic root. Some of the doctrines of the Pharisees have much in common with Persian Zoroastrian dualism.
- II. They developed during the Macabean Period from the *Hasidim* (pious ones). Several different groups like the Essenes came out of the anti-Hellenistic reaction to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Pharisees are first mentioned in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.5.1-3.
- III. Their major doctrines.
  - A. Belief in a coming Messiah, which was influenced by interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic literature like I Enoch.
  - B. God active in daily life. This was directly opposite from the Sadducees. Many Pharisaic doctrines were theological counterpoints to the doctrines of the Sadducees.
  - C. A physically oriented afterlife based on earthly life, which involved reward and punishment (cf. Dan. 12:2).
  - D. Authority of the OT and the Oral Traditions (Talmud). They were conscious of being obedient to the OT commands of God as they were interpreted and applied by schools of rabbinical scholars (Shammai, the conservative and Hillel, the liberal). The rabbinical interpretation was based on a dialogue between rabbis of two differing philosophies, one conservative and one liberal. These oral discussions over the meaning of Scripture were finally written down in two forms: the Babylonian Talmud and the incomplete Palestinian Talmud. They believed that Moses had received these oral interpretations on Mt. Sinai. The historical beginning of these discussions started with Ezra and the men of the “Great Synagogue” (later called the Sanhedrin).
  - E. Highly developed angelology. This involved both good and evil spiritual beings. This developed from Persian dualism and the interbiblical Jewish literature.

**2:16 “He was eating with sinners”** This must have been a regular event, not an exception (cf. Luke 5:29; 7:34; 15:1-2). It was so shocking to the self-righteous, religious elite!

**2:17 “those who are sick”** They had a sense of need that was essential for faith (cf. Matt. 5:3-4) and Jesus was their healer and friend (cf. Luke 7:34; 19:10).

▣ **“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** This is an ironic, possibly sarcastic statement like 7:19. This statement was not meant to imply that the religious leaders were righteous (cf. Matt. 5:20) and therefore did not need to repent, but that Jesus’ message (cf. 1:14-15) was more appealing to those who sensed their own spiritual need. Jesus uses proverbial statements often in His teaching (cf. 2:17,21,22,27; 3:27; 4:21,22,25; 7:15; 8:35,36,37; 9:40,50; 10:25,27,31,43-44). No one is more blind than those who think they see!

The Textus Receptus adds “to repentance” at the end of this verse following the Lukan parallel (cf. 5:32) and Byzantine texts, but this variant is not even included in the UBS<sup>4</sup> critical apparatus as a possibility.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" <sup>19</sup>And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup>But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."

**2:18-20 “fasting”** The Pharisees and John’s disciples were culturally conditioned to fast twice a week, on Mondays, and Thursdays (cf. Luke 18:12). The Mosaic Law only had one fast day a year, the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). These twice-a-week fasts are a good example of developed traditionalism (cf. Zechariah 7-8). Fasting loses its spiritual value when it becomes mandatory and draws attention to itself (cf. Matt. 6:16-18).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING**

Fasting, though never commanded in the NT, was expected at the appropriate time for Jesus' disciples (cf. Matt. 6:16,17; 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:35). Proper fasting is described in Isaiah 58. Jesus set the precedent Himself (cf. Matt. 4:2). The early church fasted (cf. Acts 13:2-3; 14:23; II Cor. 6:5; 11:27). The motive and manner are crucial; the timing; the length and frequency are optional. OT fasting is not a requirement for NT believers (cf. Acts 15:19-29). Fasting is not a way of showing off one's spirituality, but of drawing closer to God and seeking His guidance. It can be spiritually helpful.

The early church’s tendencies toward asceticism caused scribes to insert “fasting” in several passages (i.e. Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; I Cor. 7:5). For further information on these questionable texts consult Bruce Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, published by United Bible Societies.



**NASB, NKJV** “they came”  
**NRSV** “people came”  
**TEV, NJB** “some people came”

Verse 18 starts out noting that John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting for some occasion. Some others took note of this and came and asked Jesus about why His disciples did not fast on this occasion.

**2:19** Grammatically this question expects a negative answer.

▣ **“bridegroom”** There is so much OT imagery involved in the concept of “bridegroom.” In the OT YHWH is the bridegroom or husband of Israel. In this context Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride (cf. Eph. 5:23-32). In v. 20 “the bridegroom is taken away” refers to a time when a separation will occur.

Now, as interpreters we have two choices. First, we can see this as a cultural metaphor about a time of joy connected to a wedding. No one fasts during a wedding! Second, we can see it as parabolic of Jesus’ time on earth and His coming crucifixion. Mark (Peter’s interpreter) would have known the full implication of these metaphorically laden terms (in Judaism the bridegroom was a metaphor, not of the Messiah, but of the coming Kingdom of God). Is this a prediction of Jesus’ death? He has clearly revealed His Messiahship and deity through His words and deeds (i.e., exorcisms, healings, forgiving sins). However, the Messianic Secret of Mark causes one to wonder! But the parabolic language and its implication of vv. 21-22 make me see the entire context in a vicarious, yet eschatological, setting (i.e., the bridegroom dies, but the Son of God returns and remains). Between the death and return (i.e., the Messianic banquet), His followers will fast in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time.

**2:20 “taken away”** This may be an allusion to Isa. 53:8 in the Septuagint. After the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension Peter fully understood the significance of Isaiah 53.

☐ **“they will fast”** This is a FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE (a statement of fact), not an IMPERATIVE (command).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:21-22**

<sup>21</sup>**No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.** <sup>22</sup>**No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.**

**2:21** This reflects a cultural truth, turned into a proverb.

**2:22 “wineskins”** This referred to goats being skinned in such a way as to allow the skins to be used as a container for liquids. These newly tanned skins would have elastic qualities. When these skins became old, the fermentation process and expansion of the new wine would cause them to split. Judaism was unable to receive Jesus’ insights and corrections and, therefore, was about to be made null and void. The new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) has come in Jesus! Nothing can remain the same.

There are several Greek variants connected to this verse. Some come from the parallels in Matt. 9:17 and Luke 5:37-38. Mark’s succinct way of recording these events caused scribes to attempt to clarify his language.

Notice the metaphorical titles for Jesus in this context: (1) the physician, v. 17; (2) the bridegroom, v. 19; (3) the new wine, vv. 21-22; and (4) the Lord of the Sabbath, v. 28.

☐ **“lost”** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 3:6.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:23-28**

<sup>23</sup>**And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.** <sup>24</sup>**The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"** <sup>25</sup>**And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?"** <sup>27</sup>**Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.** <sup>28</sup>**So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."**

**2:23 “He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath”** This referred to the footpaths through the grain fields which surrounded the villages and towns. These “grainfields” could refer to any kind of cereal grain (i.e., barley, wheat).

**2:24 “why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath”** The Pharisees considered the disciples’ actions as (1) harvesting; (2) winnowing; and (3) preparing food on the Sabbath, which was illegal according to their oral traditions based on Exod. 34:21. Jesus’ disciples were not doing anything illegal in their actions according to the gleaning laws of the OT (cf. Deut. 23:25); the problem was the day (cf. Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:15; Deut. 5:12-15) on which they did it! It seems that the Gospel writers record Jesus’ actions on the Sabbath to show (1) the controversies they caused or (2) that Jesus did these kinds of things everyday and the Sabbath was no exception.

**2:25-28** This famous statement (cf. v. 27) by Jesus is unique to Mark. It expresses His authority to reinterpret OT traditional understandings and guidelines (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). This was in reality another sign that Jesus was claiming to be God’s Messiah.

**2:25** Grammatically this question expects a negative answer. It refers to an account of David’s life recorded in I Samuel 21. Jesus often used the OT to illustrate His teachings (cf. 2:25-26; 4:12; 10:6-8,19; 12:26,29-30,36).

**2:26 “the house of God”** This referred to the portable Tabernacle located at Nod.

☐ **“Abiathar”** There is a historical problem between I Sam. 21:1ff, when compared to II Sam. 8:17 and I Chr. 18:16 over the name Abiathar or Abimelech: (1) both the father and the son are called High Priest and (2) Jesus used a PREPOSITION, *epi*, with a GENITIVE in the sense of “in the days of” which meant “during his time” (cf. Acts 11:28; Heb. 1:2). We know that shortly after this event King Saul killed Abimelech and Abiathar fled to David (cf. I Sam. 22:11-23) and became one of two recognized high priests (i.e., Abiathar and Zadock).

This is one example of the kinds of problems that simply cannot be explained away. This is not Greek manuscript variation. If it was one has to assume an early scribal error before the papyri manuscripts were hand copied (which is speculation). It bothers all Bible teachers that Jesus misquotes a part of the OT history, especially since in this context Jesus is chiding the Pharisees for not reading the Scripture.

There are some books that try to deal with the conservative options in interpreting difficult texts.

1. *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch.
2. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason L. Archer.
3. *Answers to Questions* by F. F. Bruce.

▣ **“consecrated bread”** The loaves weighed about 6 pounds each! There were 12 loaves replaced weekly and the week-old loaves symbolizing YHWH’s provisions for the twelve tribes of Israel were to be eaten by the priests only (cf. Exod. 25:23-28; Lev. 24:5-9). God made an exception to the rule in this case. Jesus is claiming to have the same authority as the High Priest and the same right as the soon-to-be king, David!

**2:27** The Sabbath regulations had become the priority. These traditions had become the issue of religion, not love for humans made in God’s image. The priority of rules had replaced the priority of relationship. Merit had replaced love. Religious traditions (i.e., the Oral Law) have replaced God’s intent (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). How does one please God? A good OT analogy might be sacrifice. God intended it as a way for sinful, needy humanity to come to Him and restore broken fellowship, but it turned into a ritual, liturgical procedure. So too, Sabbath law! Mankind had become the servant instead of the object (i.e., the reason for the laws).

The three statements of vv. 27-28 are, in one sense, parallel (i.e., all use the general terms for humanity). The term “son of man” in v. 28 is the Semitic idiom for “human person” (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). It became Jesus’ self-designation. Jesus, the Man, reveals the ultimate dignity and priority of humanity! God became one of us, for us! Human need precedes religious tradition. God is for us individually and collectively.

**2:28 “Son of Man”** See note at 2:10.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the metaphors Jesus used to describe Himself in 17, 19, 21-22, 28.
2. Why were the religious leaders so hostile to Jesus’ teaching?
3. Why did Jesus call someone who was so hated and alienated as Levi to be His disciple?
4. How are Jesus’ teachings related to the oral tradition of the Jews?
5. Why isn’t fasting a regular part of our worship of God?
6. What is the central truth of Jesus’ parable in vv. 19-22?
7. Was Jesus unconcerned with ceremonial Law or is there another possibility to His actions in vv. 23-28?
8. What do you think about the historical error in v. 26?
9. How does v. 27 relate to today?

# MARK 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Man with a Withered Hand	Healing on the Sabbath	Jesus and Sabbath Laws (2:23-3:6)	The Man with a Paralyzed Hand	Cure of the Man with a Withered Hand
3:1-6	3:1-6		3:1-4a 3:4b-6	3:1-6
A Multitude at the Seaside	A Great Multitude Follows Jesus	Work of Healing	A Crowd by the Lake	The Crowds Follow Jesus
3:7-12	3:7-12	3:7-12	3:7-11 3:12	3:7-12
The Choosing of the Twelve	The Twelve Apostles	The Twelve Chosen	Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles	The Appointment of the Twelve
3:13-19	3:13-19	3:13-19a	3:13-15 3:16-19	3:13-19
Jesus and Beelzebul	A House Divided Cannot Stand	Questions About Jesus' Power 3:19b-27	Jesus and Beelzebul	His Family are Concerned about Jesus
3:20-30	3:20-27		3:20-21 3:22 3:23-26 3:27	3:20-21 Allegations of the Scribes 3:22-27
	The Unpardonable Sin			
	3:28-30	3:28-30	3:28-30	3:28-30
The Mother and Brothers of Jesus	Jesus' Mother and Brothers Send for Him		Jesus' Mother and Brothers	The True Kinsmen of Jesus
3:31-35	3:31-35	3:31-35	3:31-32 3:33-35	3:31-35

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup>He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. <sup>2</sup>They were watching Him *to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. <sup>3</sup>He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" <sup>4</sup>And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. <sup>5</sup>After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup>The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

**3:1 "into a synagogue"** This event is paralleled in Matt. 12:9-14 and Luke 6:6-11. The synagogue developed during the Babylonian Exile. It was primarily a place of education, prayer, worship, and fellowship. It was the local expression of Judaism as the Temple was the national focal point.

Jesus attended the synagogues regularly. He learned His Scriptures and traditions at synagogue school in Nazareth. He fully participated in first century Jewish worship.

It is also interesting that Jesus, apparently purposefully, acted in provocative ways on the Sabbath and in synagogue. He intentionally violated the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud) of the elders so as to enter into a theological confrontation/discussion with the religious leaders (both local and national; both Pharisees and Sadducees). The best extended discussion of His theology as it deviates from the traditional norms is the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7, especially 5:17-48).

▣ **"hand was withered"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Luke 6:6 says it was his right hand, which would have affected his ability to work.

**3:2 "They were watching Him"** This is IMPERFECT TENSE. It refers to the ever-watchful presence of the religious leaders.

▣ **"if"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true. Jesus did heal on the Sabbath in the synagogue right before their eyes!

▣ **"so that they might accuse Him"** This is a *hina*, or purpose, clause. They were not interested in the crippled man. They wanted to catch Jesus in a technical violation so as to discredit and reject Him. Jesus acts out of compassion for the man, to continue to teach His disciples, and to confront the rule-oriented, tradition-bound, self-righteousness of the religious leaders.

### 3:3

NASB	"Get up and come forward!"
NKJV	"Step forward"
NRSV	"Come forward"
TEV	"Come up here to the front"
NJB	"Get up and stand in the middle"

This is literally "Rise into the midst." This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This was so that everyone could see.

**3:4** The rabbis had a highly developed Oral Tradition (Talmud) which interpreted the Mosaic Law (cf. 2:24). They made rigid pronouncements on what could legally be done or not be done on the Sabbath. One could stabilize an injured person in an emergency, but could not improve his condition. Jesus' question revealed the problem of the priority of their cherished traditions above human needs. This is always true of legalists!

▣ **"save"** This is the Greek term *σῶζω*. It is used in two distinct ways in the NT: (1) it follows the OT usage of deliverance from physical problems and (2) it is used of spiritual salvation. In the Gospels it usually has the first meaning (cf. 3:4; 8:35a; 15:30-31;

even heal, cf. 5:23,28,34; 6:56; 10:52), but in 8:35b; 10:26; 13:13 it might refer to the second meaning. This same double usage is in James (#1 in 5:15,20, but #2 in 1:21; 2:14; 4:12).

▣ **“life”** This is the Greek word *psuchē*. It is so hard to define. It can speak of

1. our earthly physical life (cf. 3:4; 8:35; 10:45)
2. our feelings and self-consciousness (cf. 12:30; 14:34)
3. our spiritual, eternal consciousness (cf. 8:36,37)

The difficulty in translating this term comes from its Greek philosophical usage, humans having a soul, instead of the Hebrew concept of humans being a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7).

**3:5 “After looking around at them with anger”** Mark’s Gospel is the most transparent in recording Jesus’ feelings (cf. 1:40-42,43; 3:1-5; 10:13-16,17-22; 14:33-34; 15:34). The deafening silence and moral superiority of the self-righteous religious leaders angered Jesus! This event continues to clarify 2:27-28.

▣ **“grieved at their hardness of heart”** This is an intensified form of the term grief (*lupē*) with the PREPOSITION *sun*. It is only used here in the NT. Jesus identified with this man’s problem and need as He reacted negatively toward the religious leaders’ intransigence. They were unwilling to see the truth because of their commitment to tradition (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). How often does this happen to us?

The term “hardness” means calcified (cf. Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18). See Special Topic: Heart at 2:6.

▣ **“restored”** This term (i.e., to restore to its original state) implies that the withered hand was an accident, not a birth defect. The non-canonical *Gospel of Hebrews* records the tradition that he was a mason who had come to ask Jesus to restore his hand so that he could return to work.

**3:6 “The Pharisees went out”** Luke 6:11 says “in a rage.” This is literally “out of the mind” (cf. II Tim. 3:9). See note on Pharisees at 2:16.

▣ **“immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“began conspiring”** This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE used in the sense of the beginning of an action in past time. In v. 11 three IMPERFECTS are used to show repeated action in past time. These two usages are the major linguistic function of this tense.

▣ **“with the Herodians”** Normally the very conservative and nationalistic Pharisees would have nothing to do with the politically oriented Herodians who supported the reign of Herod and the Roman occupation.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HERODIANS

The term is derived from their association with the ruling family of Herod.

The Herods were an Idumaen (Edom) family of rulers starting with Herod the Great. At his death several of his sons divided his kingdom. All the Herods were supporters of the Roman government. Their followers wanted to keep the political status quo. They preferred the rule of the Herods to direct Roman rule. This group was strictly political. They did not officially identify with the theology of the Pharisees or Sadducees.

### I. The Family of the Herods

Herod the Great

A. King of Judea (37-4 B.C.)

B. Recorded in Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5

C. His sons

1. Herod Philip (son of Mariamne of Simon)

a. Husband of Herodias (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)

b. Recorded in Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17

2. Herod Philip (son of Cleopatra)

a. Tetrarch of area north and west of the Sea of Galilee (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)

b. Recorded in Luke 3:1

3. Herod Antipas
  - a. Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D. 39)
  - b. Recorded in Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14,29; Luke 3:19; 9:7-9; 13:31; 23:6-12,15; Acts 4:27; 13:1
4. Archelaus, Herod the Ethnarch
  - a. Ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 B.C. - A.D. 6)
  - b. Recorded in Matt. 2:22
5. Aristobulus (son of Mariamne)
  - a. Recorded as father of Herod Agrippa I
    - (1) King of Judea ( A.D. 37-44)
    - (2) Recorded in Acts 12:1-24; 23:35
      - (a) his son was Herod Agrippa II
        - Tetrarch of northern territory ( A.D. 50-70)
      - (b) his daughter was Bernice
        - consort of her brother
        - Acts 25:13-26:32
      - (c) his daughter was Drusilla
        - wife of Felix
        - Acts 24:24

## II. Biblical References to the Herods

- A. Herod the Tetrarch who was mentioned in Matthew 14:1ff.; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31, and 23:7, was the son of Herod the Great. At the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. The term “Tetrarch” meant “leader of the fourth part.” This Herod was known as Herod Antipas which is the shortened form of Antipater. He controlled Galilee and Perea. This meant that much of Jesus’ ministry was in the territory of this second generation Idumean ruler.
- B. Herodias was the daughter of Herod Antipas’ brother, Aristobulus, which made her his niece. She had also been previously married to Philip, the half brother of Herod Antipas. This was not Philip the Tetrarch who controlled the area just north of Galilee, but the other brother Philip who lived in Rome. Herodias had one daughter by Philip (Salome). On Herod Antipas’ visit to Rome he met and was seduced by Herodias who was looking for political advancement. Therefore, Herod Antipas divorced his wife, who was a Nabatean princess and Herodias divorced Philip so that she and Herod Antipas could be married. She was also the sister of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12).
- C. We learn the name of Herodias’ daughter, Salome, from Flavius Josephus in his book *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.4. She must have been between the ages of twelve and seventeen at this point. She was obviously controlled and manipulated by her mother. She later married Philip the Tetrarch but was soon widowed.
- D. About ten years after the beheading of John the Baptist, Herod Antipas went to Rome at the instigation of his wife Herodias to seek the title of king because Agrippa I, her brother, had received that title. But Agrippa I wrote Rome and accused Antipas of corroboration with the Parthians, a hated enemy of Rome from the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia). The Emperor apparently believed Agrippa I and Herod Antipas, along with his wife Herodias, was exiled to Spain.
- E. It may make it easier to remember these different Herods as they are presented in the New Testament by remembering that Herod the Great killed the children in Bethlehem; Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist; Herod Agrippa I killed the Apostle James; and Herod Agrippa II heard Paul’s appeal recorded in the book of Acts.

▣ **“as to how they might destroy Him”** These leaders were offended by healing on the Sabbath, but saw no problem in premeditated murder! They probably based this decision on Exod. 31:13-17. Strange things have been rationalized in the name of God. This is surely a foreshadowing of Jesus’ death at the hands of the Jewish leadership.



## SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (*APOLLUMI*)

This term has a wide semantic field, which has caused great confusion in relation to the theological concepts of eternal judgment vs. annihilation. The basic literal meaning is from *apo* plus *ollumi*, to ruin, to destroy.

The problem comes in this term's figurative usages. This can be clearly seen in Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based On Semantic Domains*, vol. 2, p. 30. It lists several meanings of this term

1. destroy (e.g., Matt. 10:28; Luke 5:37; John 10:10; 17:12; Acts 5:37; Rom. 9:22 from vol. 1, p. 232)
2. fail to obtain (e.g., Matt. 10:42, vol. 1, p. 566)
3. lose (e.g., Luke 15:8, vol. 1, p. 566)
4. unaware of location (e.g., Luke 15:4, vol. 1, p. 330)
5. die (e.g., Matt. 10:39, vol. 1, p. 266)

Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 394, tries to delineate the different usages by listing four meanings:

1. to destroy or kill (e.g., Matt. 2:13; 27:20; Mark 3:6; 9:22; Luke 6:9; I Cor. 1:19)
2. to lose or suffer loss from (e.g., Mark 9:41; Luke 15:4,8)
3. to perish (e.g., Matt. 26:52; Mark 4:38; Luke 11:51; 13:3,5,33; 15:17; John 6:12,27; I Cor. 10:9-10)
4. to be lost (e.g., Matt. 5:29-30; Mark 2:22; Luke 15: 4,6,24,32; 21:18; Acts 27:34)

Kittel then says, "in general we may say that #2 and #4 underlie statements relating to this world as in the Synoptics, whereas #1 and #3 underlie those relating to the next world, as in Paul and John" (p. 394).

Herein lies the confusion. The term has such a wide semantic usage that different NT authors use it in a variety of ways. I like Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 275-277. He relates the term to those humans who are morally destroyed and waiting eternal separation from God versus those humans who know Christ and have eternal life in Him. The latter group is "saved," while the former group is destroyed.

I personally do not think that this term denotes annihilation (cf. E. Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*). The term "eternal" is used of both eternal punishment and eternal life in Matt. 25:46. To depreciate one is to depreciate both!

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7-12

<sup>7</sup>Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, <sup>8</sup>and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. <sup>9</sup>And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; <sup>10</sup>for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. <sup>11</sup>Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" <sup>12</sup>And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

**3:7-8** Jesus' growing popularity was another reason for the opposition from the religious leaders (cf. Matt. 12:15-16; Luke 6:17-19).

**3:8 "Idumea"** This refers to the national lands of ancient Edom which was the home area of Herod.

▣ **"beyond the Jordan"** This refers to the area called Perea in the trans-Jordan region. This was one of three regions identified as responsible to the Mosaic Law (i.e., Judah, Galilee, and the land on the other side of the Jordan [i.e., Perea, cf. *Baba Bathra* 3:2]). It was officially defined as the land between the Jabbok and Arnon rivers (in the OT, Ammon and Moab).

▣ **"the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon"** This refers to the ancient kingdom of Phoenicia.

▣ **"a great number of people"** Apparently these were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.

**3:9 "a boat"** This refers to a small row boat.

▣ **"ready for Him all the time"** This boat was always available lest the crushing crowd push Him into the sea (cf. 1:45).

**3:10 "pressed around Him"** Literally this is "falling against." Every sick person wanted to touch Him (cf. 5:25-34). This crowd looked like the waiting room of a county hospital's emergency room.

**3:11** There is a series of three IMPERFECT VERBS in this verse which shows Jesus' ongoing confrontation with the demonic. See Special Topic: Exorcism at 1:25.

▣ **“Son of God”** These demons were not witnesses for Jesus' benefit, but to accentuate the crowd's misconceived expectations. This led to the charge in 3:22 that Jesus' power came from Satan (cf. Matt. 9:34; 10:25; 11:18). The Jewish leaders could not challenge Jesus' power, so they impugned the source of His authority.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD**

This is one of the major NT titles for Jesus. It surely has divine connotations. It included Jesus as “the Son” or “My Son” and God addressed as “Father.” It occurs in the NT over 124 times. Even Jesus' self-designation as “Son of Man” has a divine connotation from Dan. 7:13-14.

In the OT the designation “son” could refer to four specific groups.

1. angels (usually in the PLURAL, cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1)
2. the King of Israel (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27)
3. the nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10)
4. Israeli judges (cf. Ps. 82:6)

It is the second usage that is linked to Jesus. In this way “son of David” and “son of God” both relate to II Samuel 7; Psalm 2 and 89. In the OT “son of God” is never used specifically of the Messiah, except as the eschatological king as one of the “anointed offices” of Israel. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the title with Messianic implications is common (see specific references in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 770). Also “Son of God” is a Messianic title in two interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic works (cf. II Esdras 7:28; 13:32,37,52; 14:9 and I Enoch 105:2).

Its NT background as it refers to Jesus is best summarized by several categories.

1. His pre-existence (cf. John 1:1-18)
2. His unique (virgin) birth (cf. Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35)
3. His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. God's voice from heaven unites the royal king of Psalm 2 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53).
4. His satanic temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13. He is tempted to doubt His sonship or at least to accomplish its purpose by different means than the cross).
5. His affirmation by unacceptable confessors
  - a. demons (cf. Mark 1:23-25; Luke 4:31-37,41; Mark 3:11-12; 5:7)
  - b. unbelievers (cf. Matt. 27:43; Mark 14:61; John 19:7)
6. His affirmation by His disciples
  - a. Matt. 14:33; 16:16
  - b. John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
7. His self affirmation
  - a. Matthew 11:25-27
  - b. John 10:36
8. His use of the familial metaphor of God as Father
  - a. His use of “abba” for God
    - 1) Mark 14:36
    - 2) Romans 8:15
    - 3) Galatians 4:6
  - b. His recurrent use of Father (*patēr*) to describe His relationship to deity

In summary, the title “Son of God” had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles because of their pagan background of “the gods” taking women with the resulting offspring being “the titans” or “giants.”

**3:12** This is the continuing emphasis on “the Messianic Secret” in Mark. Jesus, by word and deed, is fully revealed as the Messiah early in Mark, but because of the misunderstanding of (1) the Jewish leadership (i.e., Messiah as national hero restoring Israel to world prominence) and (2) the crowd (i.e., Messiah as miracle worker), Jesus admonishes several different people not to broadcast their knowledge of Him. The gospel is only finished after His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-19

<sup>13</sup>And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. <sup>14</sup>And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, <sup>15</sup>and to have authority to cast out the demons. <sup>16</sup>And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup>and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); <sup>18</sup>and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup>and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

**3:13 “He went up on the mountain”** This could be understood in two ways: (1) Jesus left the area close by the sea of Galilee and went up into the hill country or (2) this is a prelude to the setting of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7), which Mark does not record.

**3:14 “appointed twelve”** This is paralleled in Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, Luke 6:12-16. Mark does not record Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (i.e., Matt. 5-7).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE

Twelve has always been a symbolic number of organization

1. outside the Bible
  - a. twelve signs of the Zodiac
  - b. twelve months of the year
2. in the OT
  - a. the sons of Jacob (the Jewish tribes)
  - b. reflected in
    - (1) twelve pillars of the altar in Exod. 24:4
    - (2) twelve jewels on the high priest’s breastplate (which stand for the tribes) in Exod. 28:21
    - (3) twelve loaves of bread in the holy place of the tabernacle in Lev. 24:5
    - (4) twelve spies sent into Canaan in Num. 13 (one from each tribe)
    - (5) twelve rods (tribal standards) at Korah’s rebellion in Num. 17:2
    - (6) twelve stones of Joshua in Josh. 4:3,9,20
    - (7) twelve administrative districts in Solomon’s administration in I Kgs. 4:7
    - (8) twelve stones of Elijah’s altar to YHWH in I Kgs. 18:31
3. in the NT
  - a. twelve apostles chosen
  - b. twelve baskets of bread (one for each Apostle) in Matt. 14:20
  - c. twelve thrones on which NT disciples sit (referring to the 12 tribes of Israel) in Matt. 19:28
  - d. twelve legions of angels to rescue Jesus in Matt. 26:53
  - e. the symbolism of Revelation
    - (1) 24 elders on 24 thrones in 4:4
    - (2) 144,000 (12x12) in 7:4; 14:1,3
    - (3) twelve stars on the woman’s crown in 12:1
    - (4) twelve gates, twelve angels reflecting the twelve tribes in 21:12
    - (5) twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem and on them the names of the twelve Apostles in 21:14
    - (6) twelve thousand stadia in 21:16 (size of new city, New Jerusalem)
    - (7) wall is 144 cubits in 21:7
    - (8) twelve gates of pearl in 21:21
    - (9) trees in new Jerusalem with twelve kinds of fruit (one for each month ) in 22:2

**3:14** There is another phrase added to this verse by the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts **ℵ**, **B**, and with slight change, in **C**. The added phrase is “whom he also named apostles” (see footnote in NRSV). Many textual critics assume that this addition is an assimilation from Luke 6:13.

▣ **“so that they would be with Him”** Jesus was intimately involved in the training of the Twelve. Robert Coleman has authored two helpful books on Jesus’ methods: *The Master Plan of Evangelism* and *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, both of which deal with the growth of the early church using the same principles as Jesus.

▣ **“send them out to preach”** Jesus came to preach the good news of the kingdom. He trained His disciples to do the same: (1) the Twelve (cf. 6:7-13; Matt. 10:1,9-14; Luke 9:1-6) and (2) later, seventy disciples (cf. Luke 10:1-20).

**3:15 “demons”** This possibly refers to fallen angels, active on Satan’s behalf. However, the Bible is silent on the origin of the demonic. Jesus’ authority over them establishes His power and Messianic mission. See Special Topic at 1:24.

**3:16 “He appointed the twelve”** The Twelve are mentioned in the NT four times (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; and Acts 1:13 [identical to Matt. 10:2-4]). The list always appears in four groups of three people. The order often changes within the groups (but Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot is always last). It is possible that these groupings reflect a rotating way of allowing these men to return home from time to time to check on their family responsibilities.

It is amazing how little we know about most of the early Apostles. Early church tradition is often all we have to rely on.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE CHART OF APOSTLES’ NAMES

	Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:12-18
<b>First Group</b>	Simon (Peter) Andrew (Peter’s brother) James (son of Zebedee) John (James’ brother)	Simon (Peter) James (son of Zebedee) John (James’ brother) Andrew	Simon (Peter) Andrew (Peter’s brother) James John	Peter John James Andrew
<b>Second Group</b>	Philip Bartholomew Thomas Matthew (tax gatherer)	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Thomas Bartholomew Matthew
<b>Third Group</b>	James (son of Alphaeus) Thaddaeus Simon (the Cananean) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Thaddaeus Simon (the Cananean) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Simon (the zealot) Judas (son of James) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Simon (the zealot) Judas (son of James)

▣ **“Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter)”** Most Jews of Galilee had both a Jewish name (i.e., Simon or Symeon, meaning “hearing”) and a Greek name (which is never given). Jesus nicknames him “rock.” In Greek it is *petros* and in Aramaic it is *cephas* (cf. John 1:42; Matt. 16:16).

Peter is the eyewitness, apostolic source behind the Gospel of Mark. See Introduction for complete notes.

**3:17 “Boanerges. . .Sons of Thunder”** Mark translates the Aramaic name for his Gentile (probably Roman) readers. These brothers (i.e., James and John) live up to the nickname in Luke 9:54.

**3:18 “Andrew”** The Greek term means “manly.” From John 1:29-42 we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and that he introduced his brother, Peter, to Jesus.

▣ **“Philip”** The Greek term means “fond of horses.” His call is elaborated in John 1:43-51.

▣ **“Bartholomew”** The term means “son of Ptolemy.” He may be the Nathanael of the Gospel of John (cf. John 1:45-49; 21:20).

▣ **“Matthew”** The Hebrew term means “gift of YHWH.” This is referring to Levi (cf. 2:13-17).

▣ **“Thomas”** The Hebrew term means “twin” or Didymus (cf. John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2).

▣ **“James”** This is the Hebrew name “Jacob.” There are two men named James in the list of the Twelve. One is the brother of John (cf. v. 17) and part of the inner circle (i.e., Peter, James, and John). This one is known as James the less.

▣ **“Thaddaeus”** He was also called “Lebbeus” (cf. Matt. 10:3) or “Judas” (cf. John 14:22). Both Thaddaeus and Lebbeus mean “beloved child.”



NASB, NJB “Simon the Zealot”  
 NKJV “Simon the Canaanite”  
 NRSV “Simon the Cananean”  
 TEV “Simon the Patriot”

The Greek text of Mark has “Cananean” (also Matt. 10:4). Mark, whose Gospel was written to Romans, may not wanted to use the politically “hot-button” word “zealot,” which referred to a Jewish anti-Roman guerrilla movement. Luke does call him by this term (cf. Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13). The term Cananean may have several derivatives.

1. of the area of Galilee known as Cana
2. from the OT use of Canaanite as merchant
3. from a general designation as a native of Canaan (also called Palestine)

If Luke’s designation is right, then “zealot” is from the Aramaic term for “enthusiast” (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:17). Jesus’ chosen twelve disciples were from several different and competing groups. Simon was a member of a nationalistic group which advocated the violent overthrow of Roman authority. Normally this Simon and Levi (i.e., Matthew the tax collector) would not have been in the same room with each other.

**3:19 “Judas Iscariot”** There are two Simons, two Jameses, and two Judases. “Iscariot” has two possible derivations: (1) man of Kerioth in Judah (cf. Josh. 15:23) or (2) “dagger man” or assassin, which would mean he also was a zealot, like Simon.

▣ **“who betrayed Him”** This verb has been colored by John’s Gospel’s description of Judas (cf. John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2,26-27; 18:2-5). Originally it simply meant “turn over to authorities” (cf. Mark 1:14). Judas’ psychological and/or theological motivation in betraying Jesus is a mystery.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:20-27**

<sup>20</sup>And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. <sup>21</sup>When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." <sup>22</sup>The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." <sup>23</sup>And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup>If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! <sup>27</sup>But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

**3:20 “He came home”** This must refer to the same house as 2:1 and possibly 7:17; 9:38.

▣ **“the crowd”** This was the result of Jesus’ healing and deliverance ministry (cf. 1:45; 2:2,13; 3:7,20).

▣ **“that they could not even eat a meal”** This was what concerned His family so much. Jesus always had time for needy people. He gave Himself to them.

**3:21**

NASB, NKJV “His own people”  
 NRSV, TEV “his family”  
 NJB “his relations”

Literally this is “those from his side.” The KJV has “friends,” but apparently this was His mother and siblings.



NASB “to take custody of Him”  
 NKJV “to lay hold of Him”  
 NRSV “to restrain Him”  
 TEV, NJB “to take charge of him”

This is a strong VERB in Matthew (cf. 14:3; 18:28), but usually not violent in Mark. It often refers to helping sick people rise by taking them by the hand. His family tried to take Him home forcefully because they thought He was acting irrationally (cf. vv. 31-35).



NASB “He has lost His senses”  
 NKJV, NJB “He is out of His mind”

**NRSV**                    **“He has gone out of his mind”**  
**TEV**                    **“He’s gone mad”**

The Greek text is ambiguous as to who made this statement. Was it the family (i.e., NASB, NKJV, NJB, NIV) or something the family had heard others say (i.e., NRSV, TEV)?

The term in this context means “separated from mental balance” (cf. II Cor. 5:13). It is often used in Mark for people being “amazed” (cf. 2:12; 5:42).

This shows that although Jesus was popular with the crowds, He was misunderstood by (1) His own disciples; (2) the religious leaders; (3) His own family; and (4) the crowds themselves.

**3:22 “The scribes who came down from Jerusalem”** This may refer to those mentioned in 2:6,16, who were apparently an official deputation from the Sanhedrin sent to gather information on Jesus’ teachings and actions.

▣ **“He is possessed by”** This meant he was possessed by a demon and derived His power from Satan (cf. Matt. 9:34; John 7:20; 8:48-52; 10:20). The same thing was said of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:18). They could not deny Jesus’ miracles so they impugned the source of His power and authority.

▣ **“Beelzebul”** This indeclinable noun is spelled Beelzebub in KJV, but Beelzebul in most modern translations. The “beel” reflects the Semitic word *ba’al*, which means “lord,” “owner,” “master,” or “husband.” It was the name for the fertility storm-god of Canaan.

The “zebul” can mean (1) heights (i.e., mountain or heaven); (2) prince (i.e., Zabol); or (3) dung. The Jews often changed the letters of foreign gods to form a derogatory pun.

If it is “zebul” it could refer to

1. the baal of Ekron (cf. II Kgs. 1:2,3,6)
2. a god of the Philistines, Zebaba
3. an Aramaic word play or pun on “lord of enmity” (i.e., *be’el debaba*)
4. “lord of the flies” (Aramaic “fly” *dibaba*)

This spelling, *Beelzebub*, is unknown in rabbinical Judaism.

For further information on the names for personal evil see *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 468-473.

▣ **“ruler of the demons”** The name Beelzebul was not a common name for Satan in Judaism. Jesus uses it as synonymous with Satan in v. 23.

**3:23-26** Jesus showed the logical folly of attributing His power over the demonic to Satan. Obviously a leader against his servants is a disaster!

**3:23 “He called them to Himself”** This was to show them (i.e., the scribes of v. 22) that He could read their thoughts (see note at 2:6b). It also gave them one more chance to clearly hear His message.

▣ **“parables”** The literal meaning of this term (*parabolē*, used 13 times in Mark) is “to throw alongside.” A common occurrence of life is used to illustrate spiritual truth.

**3:24 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE meaning potential action.

**3:27 “unless he first binds the strong man”** This was a veiled Messianic reference to Isa. 49:24-25. It also showed Jesus’ realization that He was stronger than Satan.

The act of exorcism was common in Judaism (cf. 9:38; Acts 19:14). What was uncommon is the power and authority exercised by Jesus versus the magical potions and formulas used by the rabbis. Jesus clearly shows that by His coming Satan is already defeated! Augustine even quoted Mark 3:24 as evidence that the promised millennium was already present (i.e., amillennialism).

This verse is often used today as a proof-text for “binding” Satan from Christian meetings. This text cannot function as a precedent for Christians praying against Satan. Believers are never instructed to address Satan. This verse has been turned into a superstitious mantra which is totally out of character with the NT.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:28-30

<sup>28</sup>"Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— <sup>30</sup>because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

**3:28 "Truly"** This is literally "amen." Jesus' initial use of "truly" is unique. It usually precedes a significant statement.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

### I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term "Amen" is from a Hebrew word for
  - 1. "truth" (*emeth*, BDB 49)
  - 2. "truthfulness" (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53)
  - 3. "faith" or "faithfulness"
  - 4. "trust" (*dmn*, BDB 52)
- B. Its etymology is from a person's stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67; 38:16; Psalm 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
  - 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
  - 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
  - 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
  - 4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
  - 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
  - 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
  - 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
  - 1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
  - 2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind's faithfulness, but YHWH's (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

### II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement's trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43).
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness, or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as "trust," "faith," "believe."

▣ **"all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter"** This showed the scope of God's grace in Christ. The phrase "the sons of men" is the normal Semitic idiom referring to human beings (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1).

**3:29 “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit”** This must be understood in its pre-Pentecostal historical setting. It was used in the sense of God’s truth being rejected. The teaching of this verse has commonly been called “the unpardonable sin.” It must be interpreted in light of the following criteria:

1. the distinction in the OT between “intentional” and “unintentional sins,” (cf. Num. 15:27-31)
2. the unbelief of Jesus’ own family contrasted with the unbelief of the Pharisees in this context
3. the statements of forgiveness in v. 28
4. the differences between the Gospel parallels, particularly the change of “son of man,” (cf. Matt. 12:32; Luke 12:10) to “sons of men,” (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28).

In light of the above, this sin is committed by those who, in the presence of great light and understanding, still reject Jesus as God’s means of revelation and salvation. They turn the light of the gospel into the darkness of Satan (cf. v. 30). They reject the Spirit’s drawing and conviction (cf. John 6:44,65). The unpardonable sin is not a rejection by God because of some single act or word, but the continual, ongoing rejection of God in Christ by willful unbelief (i.e., the scribes and Pharisees).

This sin can only be committed by those who have been exposed to the gospel. Those who have heard the message about Jesus clearly are the most responsible for its rejection. This is especially true of modern cultures that have continual access to the gospel, but reject Jesus (i.e., America, western culture).

For the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity see Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT**

In the OT “the Spirit of God” (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH’s purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented:

1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)
5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*) (cf. Eph. 1:14)
6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
7. He can be quenched (cf. I Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts also speak of three persons.

1. Matt. 28:19
2. II Cor. 13:14
3. I Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

1. Acts 15:28
2. Rom. 8:26
3. I Cor. 12:11
4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit’s role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father’s love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

▣ **“never has forgiveness”** This statement must be interpreted in light of v. 28.

▣ **“but is guilty of an eternal sin”** This was a willful rejection of the gospel (i.e., the person and works of Jesus) in the presence of great light!

There are many variants related to the phrase “an eternal sin.” Some ancient Greek manuscripts

1. changed it to a GENITIVE phrase (i.e., *hamartias*) – C\*, D, W
2. added “judgment” (i.e., *kriseōs*) – A and C<sup>2</sup> (cf. KJV)
3. added “torment” (i.e., *kolaseōs*), minuscule 1234

It was shocking to the early scribes to talk about an “eternal sin.”

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives “an eternal sin” a B rating (almost certain).



## SPECIAL TOPIC: ETERNAL

Robert B. Girdlestone, in his book *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, has an interesting comment on the word “eternal”:

“The adjective *aiōnios* is used more than forty times in the N.T. with respect to *eternal life*, which is regarded partly as a present gift, partly as a promise for the future. It is also applied to God’s endless existence in Rom. 16.26; to the endless efficacy of Christ’s atonement in Heb. 9.12, 13.20; and to past ages in Rom. 16.25, 2 Tim. 1.9, Titus 1.2.

This word is used with reference to *eternal fire*, Matt. 18.8,25. 41, Jude 7; *eternal punishment*, Matt. 25.46; *eternal judgment* or *condemnation*, Mark 3.29, Heb. 6.2; *eternal destruction*, 2 Thess. 1.9. The word in these passages implies *finality*, and apparently signifies that when these judgments shall be inflicted, the time of probation, change, or the chance of retrieving one’s fortune, will have gone by absolutely and for ever. We understand very little about the future, about the relation of human life to the rest of existence, and about the moral weight of unbelief, as viewed in the light of eternity. If, on the one hand, it is wrong to add to God’s word, on the other we must not take away from it; and if we stagger under the doctrine of eternal punishment as it is set forth in Scripture, we must be content to wait, cleaving to the Gospel of God’s love in Christ, while acknowledging that there is a dark background which we are unable to comprehend” (pp. 318-319).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: EXEGETICAL PROCEDURES FOR INTERPRETING “THE UNPARDONABLE SIN”

- A. Remember that the Gospels reflect a Jewish setting
  - 1. Two kinds of sins (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15,17-19; Num. 15:27-31; Deut. 1:43; 17:12-13)
    - a. unintentional
    - b. intentional
  - 2. Pre-Pentecostal Jewish setting (i.e., the fulfillment of the gospel and the Spirit have not yet been manifested)
- B. Note the literary context of Mark 3:22-30
  - 1. The unbelief of Jesus’ own family (cf. 3:31-32)
  - 2. The unbelief of the Pharisees (cf. 2:24; 3:1,6,22)
- C. Compare parallels where the title “Son of Man” changes to “sons of men”
  - 1. Matt. 12:22-37 (i.e., 12:32, “a word against the Son of Man”)
  - 2. Luke 11:14-26; 12:8-12 (i.e., 12:10, “a word against the Son of Man”)
  - 3. Mark 3:28 (i.e., “All sins shall be forgiven the sons of men”)

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:31-35

<sup>31</sup>Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called Him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." <sup>33</sup>Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" <sup>34</sup>Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! <sup>35</sup>For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."

**3:31-35** These verses are related to v. 21. There is an obvious contrast between the ignorant, but compassionate, unbelief of Jesus’ family (cf. John 7:5) and the willful, hostile unbelief of the religious leaders. Jesus specifically states that God’s will is belief in Himself (cf. John 6:40; 14:6).

**3:33 “Who are My mother and My brothers”** This shocking question shows Jesus self-understanding and the radical nature of biblical faith that can only be described in terms of a new birth, a new family. Family life was such an important aspect of Jewish life that to use these family terms for fellow believers is significant. Believers relate to deity as family members; God is Father, Jesus is the unique Son and Savior, but we, too, are children of God.

**3:35 “For whoever does the will of God”** Faith in Christ is God’s will for all humans (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 6:40; 14:6; I John 5:12,13). See Special Topic: The Will of God at I Pet. 2:15. Notice the inclusive, universal invitation to respond in faith to Jesus and His message.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the setting of Luke different from that of Mark? (vv. 22-30)  
What does Matthew’s account add to Mark’s?
2. Why did the religious leaders make these charges against Jesus in this chapter? Did they know better?
3. Why does Jesus try to reason with them?
4. What is “the unpardonable sin?”
5. In what context can the unpardonable sin be committed today? Can one know if he/she has committed it?
6. Is this passage on the unpardonable sin related to I John 5:16 or Heb. 6 and 10?
7. How is this sin related to salvation? How is this sin related to the unbelief of Jesus’ family?
8. Is blasphemy against Jesus forgivable but not against the Holy Spirit? What is the difference (compare Matt. 12:31-32 to Luke 12:10 and Mark 3:28)?

# MARK 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Sower 4:1-9	The Parable of the Sower 4:1-9	Teaching in Parables 4:1-9	The Parable of the Sower 4:1-2 4:3-8 4:9	Parable of the Sower 4:1-9
The Purpose of the Parables 4:10-12	The Purpose of Parables 4:10-12	4:10-12	The Purpose of Parables 4:10-12	Why Jesus Spoke in Parables 4:10-12
The Parable of the Sower Explained 4:13-20	The Parable of the Sower Explained 4:13-20	4:13-20	Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower 4:13-20	The Parable of the Sower Explained 4:13-20
A Light Under a Bushel 4:21-23	Light Under a Basket 4:21-25	4:21-25	A Lamp Under a Bowl 4:21-23	Receiving and Handling the Teaching of Jesus 4:21-23
4:24-25			4:24-25	Parable of the Measure 4:24-25
The Parable of the Growing Seed 4:26-29	The Parable of the Growing Seed 4:26-29	The Seed Growing Secretly 4:26-29	The Parable of the Growing Seed 4:26-29	Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself 4:26-29
The Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32	The Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32	The Mustard Seed 4:30-32	The Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32	Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32
The Use of Parables 4:33-34	Jesus' Use of Parables 4:33-34	4:33-34	4:33-34	The Use of Parables 4:33-34
The Calming of A Storm 4:35-41	Wind and Wave Obey 4:35-41	Wind and Sea Calmed 4:35-41	Jesus Calms a Storm 4:35-38 4:39-40 4:41	The Calming of the Storm 4:35-41

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The next several chapters in Mark reflect the growing opposition of the religious leaders. Mark contrasts Jesus' popularity with the crowds with His unpopularity with the religious leadership.
- B. Jesus has moved from synagogue preaching to open air meetings. This was one way of reducing the influence of the religious leadership and accentuating the opportunity of the general population to hear His words.
- C. The understanding of parables was and is related to a prior faith commitment. Even the Apostles did not initially understand Jesus' parabolic teachings. In some ways understanding is dependent upon
  1. election
  2. the illuminating power of the Spirit
  3. a willingness to repent and believe
 Understanding involves a divine empowering and a human faith response!

- D. "Parable" is a compound word in Greek meaning "to throw alongside." Common occurrences were used to illustrate spiritual truths. However it must be remembered that to Gospel writers this Greek word reflected the Hebrew *mashal* (BDB 605), which meant "riddle" or "proverb," a word of wisdom. One must be willing to rethink issues and expected outcomes in light of the surprising nature of the kingdom of God which is now present in Jesus. For some hearers parables hide truth (cf. 4:10-12).

- E. The parables in Mark 4 have parallels in Matthew and Luke

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>
The Four Soils		
4:3-20	13:3-23	8:5-15
A Light Hidden		
4:21-25		8:16-18
The Seed Growing		
4:26-29		
The Mustard Seed		
4:30-32	13:31-32	
Use of Parables		
4:33-34	13:33-35	
(cf. 4:10-12)		

- F. The Parable of the Soils or the Parable of the Sower, found in all the Synoptic Gospels, is the interpretive key to the others. Jesus took time to explain it in private to the disciples. Until this they did not understand, so what is the chance that others did? This parable has typological and/or allegorical aspects, which must be identified or the intended meaning is lost.
- G. Mark 4:21-25 is repeated in Matthew in different contexts:
  - Mark 4:21 – Matthew 5:15
  - Mark 4:22 – Matthew 10:26
  - Mark 4:24 – Matthew 7:2
  - Mark 4:25 – Matthew 13:12; 25:29
 There are at least two explanations
  1. Jesus repeated and reapplied His teachings and illustrations to different groups at different times.
  2. The Gospel writers are selecting, arranging, and adapting Jesus' words for their own literary and theological purposes (cf. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, pp. 113-134).

- H. Mark records a series of miracles which reveal Jesus' power and authority in 4:35-8:26. The miracles were meant to confirm the truthfulness of Jesus' radical new teachings. He made Himself the issue!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERPRETING PARABLES

The Gospels were written many years after Jesus' life. The Gospel writers (by the aid of the Spirit) were culturally accustomed to oral tradition. The rabbis taught by oral presentation. Jesus mimicked this oral approach to teaching. To our knowledge He never wrote down any of His teachings or sermons. To aid in the memory, teaching presentations were repeated, summarized and illustrated. The Gospel writers retained these memory aids. Parables are one of these techniques. Parables are hard to define:

"Parables are best defined as stories with two levels of meaning; the story level provides a mirror by which reality is perceived and understood." taken from *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, (p. 594).

"A parable is a saying or story that seeks to drive home a point that the speaker wishes to emphasize by illustrating it from a familiar situation of common life." taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*" (p. 590).

It is hard to define exactly what was understood by the term "parable" in Jesus' day

1. Some say it reflects the Hebrew term *mashal* which was any kind of riddle (Mark 3:23), clever saying (Proverbs, Luke 4:23), short saying (Mark 7:15) or mysterious saying ("dark saying").
2. Others hold to a more limited definition of a short story.

Depending on how one defines the term, over one-third of Jesus' recorded teachings are in parabolic form. This was a major NT literary genre. Parables are certainly authentic sayings of Jesus. If one accepts the second definition, there are still several different types of short stories

1. simple stories (Luke 13:6-9)
2. complex stories (Luke 15:11-32)
3. contrasting stories (Luke 16:1-8; 18:1-8)
4. typological/allegorical (Matt. 13:24-30, 47-50; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15; 10:25-37; 14:16-24; 20:9-19; John. 10; 15:1-8)

In dealing with this variety of parabolic material one must interpret these sayings on several levels.

The **first level** would be general hermeneutic principles applicable to all biblical genres. Some guidelines:

1. identify the purpose of the entire book or at least the larger literary unit
2. identify the original audience. It is significant that often the same parable is given to different groups, example:
  - a. lost sheep in Luke 15 directed to sinners
  - b. lost sheep in Matt. 18 directed toward disciples
3. be sure to note the immediate context of the parable. Often Jesus or the gospel writer tells the main point (usually at the end of the parable or immediately after it).
4. express the central intent(s) of the parable in one declarative sentence. Parables often have two or three main characters. Usually there is an implied truth, purpose or point (plot) to each character.
5. check the parallel passages in the other Gospels, then other NT books and OT books.

The **second level** of interpretive principles are those that relate specifically to parabolic material

1. Read (hear if possible) the parable again and again. These were given for oral impact, not written analysis.
2. Most parables have only one central truth which is related to the historical and literary contexts of both Jesus and/or the evangelist.
3. Be careful of interpreting the details. Often they are just part of the setting of the story.
4. Remember parables are not reality. They are life-like analogies, but often exaggerations, to drive home a point (truth).
5. Identify the main points of the story that a first century Jewish audience would have understood. Then look for the twist or surprise. Usually it comes toward the end of the story (cf. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, pp. 221-224).
6. All parables were given to elicit a response. That response is usually related to the concept of "the Kingdom of God." Jesus was the inaugurator of the new Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 21:31; Luke 17:21). Those who heard Him must respond to Him now!

The Kingdom was also future (Matt. 25). A person's future was dependent on how he responded to Jesus at the time. Kingdom parables described the new kingdom that had arrived

in Jesus. They described its ethical and radical demands for discipleship. Nothing can be as it was. All is radically new and focused on Jesus!

7. Parables often do not express the point or central truth. The interpreter must seek the contextual keys that reveal the originally culturally obvious central truths but now obscure to us.

A **third level** that is often controversial is that of the hiddenness of parabolic truth. Jesus often spoke of the hiddenness of parables (cf. Matt. 13:9-15; Mark 4:9-13; Luke 8:8-10; John. 10:6; 16:25). This was related to the prophecy in Isa. 6:9-10. The heart of the hearer determines the level of understanding (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,15,16,43; Mark 4:9,23,33-34; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 9:44; 14:35).

However, it must also be stated that often the crowd (Matt. 15:10; Mark 7:14) and the Pharisees (Matt. 21:45; Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19) understood exactly what Jesus was saying but refused to respond appropriately to it by faith and repentance. In one sense this is the truth of the Parable of the Soils (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8).

The parables were a means to conceal or reveal truth (Matt. 13:16-17; 16:12; 17:13; Luke 8:10; 10:23-24).

Grant Osborne, in his *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 239, makes the point that “parables are an ‘encounter mechanism’ and function differently depending on the audience...Each group (leaders, crowds, disciples) is encountered differently by the parables.” Often even the disciples did not understand either His parables or His teachings (cf. Matt. 15:16; Mark 6:52; 8:17-18,21; 9:32; Luke 9:45; 18:34; John. 12:16).

A **fourth level** is also controversial. It deals with the central truth of parables. Most modern interpreters have reacted (justifiably so) to the allegorical interpretation of the parables. Allegory turned the details into elaborate systems of truth. This method of interpretation did not focus on the historical setting, literary setting or authorial intent, but presented the thought of the interpreter, not the text.

However, it must be admitted that the parables that Jesus interpreted are very close to allegorical or at least typological. Jesus used the details to convey truth (the Sower, Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8 and the wicked tenants, Matthew 21; Mark 12, Luke 20).

Some of the other parables also have several main truths. A good example is the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). It is not only the love of the Father and waywardness of the younger son but the attitude of the older son that is integral to the full meaning of the parable.

A helpful quote from *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* by Peter Cotterell and Max Turner:

“It was Adolf Julicher more than any other who directed New Testament scholarship towards a decisive attempt to understand the role of parable in the teaching of Jesus. The radical allegorizing of the parables was abandoned and the search begun for a key that would enable us to penetrate their true meaning. But as Jeremias made clear, ‘His efforts to free the parables from

the fantastic and arbitrary interpretations of every detail caused him to fall into a fatal error.’ The error was to insist not merely that a parable should be understood as conveying a single idea, but that the idea should be as general as possible” (p. 308).

Another helpful quote from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne:

“Yet I have noted many indications that the parables are indeed allegories, albeit controlled by the author’s intention. Blomberg (1990) in fact argues that there are as many points as there are characters in the parables and that they are indeed allegories. While this is somewhat overstated, it is nearer the truth than the ‘one point’ approach” (p. 240).

Should parables be used to teach doctrinal truths or illuminate doctrinal truths? Most interpreters have been influenced by the abuse of the allegorical method of interpreting parables which allowed them to be used to establish doctrines that had no connection to Jesus’ original intent nor that of the gospel writer. Meaning must be linked to authorial intent. Jesus and the gospel writers were under inspiration, but interpreters are not.

However badly the parables have been abused they still function as teaching vehicles of truth, doctrinal truth. Hear Bernard Ramm on this point.

“Parables do teach doctrine and the claim that they may not be used at all in doctrinal writing is improper...we must check our results with plain, evident teaching of our Lord, and with the rest of the New Testament. Parables with proper cautions may be used to illustrate doctrine, illuminate Christian experience and to teach practical lessons.” *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*” (p. 285).

In conclusion let me give three quotes that reflect warnings in our interpretation of parables:

1. Taken from *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart:  
“The parables have suffered a fate of misinterpretation in the church second only to the Revelation” (p. 135).
2. Taken from *Understanding and Applying the Bible* by J. Robertson McQuilkin,  
“Parables have been the source of untold blessing in enlightening God’s people concerning spiritual truth. At the same time, parables have been the source of untold confusion in both doctrine and practice in the church” (p. 164).
3. Taken from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne,  
“Parables have been among the most written about yet hermeneutically abused portions of Scripture...the most dynamic yet the most difficult to comprehend of the biblical genres. The potential of the parable for communication is enormous, since it creates a comparison or story based upon everyday experiences. However, that story itself is capable of many meanings, and the modern reader has as much difficulty interpreting it as did the ancient hearers” (p. 235).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. <sup>2</sup>And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, <sup>3</sup>“Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; <sup>4</sup>as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” <sup>9</sup>And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

**4:1 “He began to teach again by the sea”** This was not something entirely new (cf. 2:113; 3:7) but now that the synagogue was becoming increasingly closed to Him, He continued these open air teaching services. Jesus wanted the common person to have access to Him and His teachings.

▣ **“such a very large crowd gathered”** There was a large crowd, but the parable implies that few responded. The presence of a large crowd is a recurrent theme in Mark (cf. 2:13; 3:9; 4:1,36; 5:31; 7:33; 8:1,2; 9:14,17; 14:43; 15:8).

▣ **“a boat”** This Greek term referred to a sail boat. In 3:9 Jesus asked for a waiting row boat in case the pressure of the crowd became too great. It then would become a speaking platform. Every sick person wanted to touch Him. What a press this must have caused.

▣ **“sat down”** One wonders if Jesus’ sitting (i.e., versus standing) reflects the cultural norm of Jewish teachers (i.e., the rabbis sat to teach) or if this was caused by the instability of the boat.

▣ **“on the land”** Jesus may have been using the natural voice amplification of the water to speak to such a large crowd.

**4:2 “He was teaching them”** This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE meaning He taught again and again (i.e., “many things”).

▣ **“parables”** See Special Issue: Interpreting Parables at introduction to chapter 4.

**4:3 “Listen to this”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Remember, parables were given orally. The rabbis would teach, then summarize, then illustrate. Jesus follows this pattern (cf. William L. Blevins’ *Birth of a New Testament*, pp. 1-13).

▣ **“sower”** This was a very common sight in Galilee. This parable makes so much sense when one realizes how these village farmers plowed all of the ground around their villages. These farrows were across paths, weeds, etc. Then they sowed the entire field by hand. Jesus used this common practice to illustrate spiritual receptivity (i.e., four kinds of soils).

**4:4 “beside the road”** This refers to the public footpaths through the collective fields of the villages. When these fields were plowed the trails disappeared briefly but they quickly reappeared with use.

**4:5 “rocky ground”** This referred to a rocky formation, under just a few inches of soil, not loose rocks in the field. The shallowness of the soil was not obvious to the viewer.

**4:7 “among the thorns”** This referred to the well-established thorn patches that were also not visible after plowing.

**4:8 “yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold”** Different types of soil and location allowed different amounts of fruit. There are several manuscript variants related to the PREPOSITION *en*. However, the variety of Greek manuscript variations really does not change the meaning of the text. Probably all three should be *en*, which would follow an Aramaic influence.

**4:9, 23 “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”** This is a Semitic idiom. It shows the need for careful thought and personal application (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,43; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). This probably reflects the Hebrew prayer, the *Shema* (cf. Deut. 6:4), which meant “to hear so as to do.” Hearing must result in action (cf. James 2:14-26).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:10-12**

<sup>10</sup>As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began asking Him about the parables.* <sup>11</sup>And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, <sup>12</sup>so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

**4:10 “As soon as He was alone”** This means alone with the disciples. They were apparently embarrassed to ask questions in public. It is obvious they did not understand the parable.

**4:11 “To you has been given”** This is PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. We are responsible stewards of the spiritual truths we possess. “To whom much is given, much is required” (cf. Luke 12:48).

This private teaching, which seems to be a regular occurrence, may explain the differences between the Synoptic Gospels and John’s Gospel. Jesus speaks very differently in John. It is possible that the parabolic teachings, so common in the Synoptics, was done before the crowds and that the totally different style (i.e., “I Am” statements) were done in private with the disciples and this is what the Gospel of John records.

It is just possible that this whole issue of special instruction for the Twelve may have functioned in the early church as a way of accentuating Apostolic authority. They, and they alone, knew the “true” interpretation of Jesus’ words. All revelation comes through these chosen and inspired disciples.

▣ **“the mystery”** This is the Greek term *mustērion*. It is used in the NT in several different senses. In this context it is revealed truth which the leaders and the crowd could not comprehend (cf. Isa. 6:9-10).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MYSTERY IN THE GOSPELS**

- A. In the Synoptic Gospels “mystery” is used of the spiritual insights gleaned from Jesus’ parables.
  - 1. Mark 4:11
  - 2. Matthew 13:11
  - 3. Luke 8:10
- B. Paul uses it in several different ways.
  - 1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included. This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism for Jews to accept Jesus as the Christ of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
  - 2. The gospel made known to the nations, telling them that they are all included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
  - 3. Believers’ new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 15:5-57; I Thess. 4:13-18).
  - 4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11).
  - 5. The Gentiles and Jews as fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).
  - 6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).



7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in man (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 6:5,11-13; 8:21; 9:6; Col. 1:26-28).
  8. The end time Anti-Christ (cf. II Thess. 2:1-11).
  9. An early church hymn about the mystery of the gospel is found in I Tim. 3:16.
- C. In John's Revelation it is used of the meaning of John's apocalyptic symbols.
1. 1:20
  2. 10:7
  3. 17:5,6
- D. These are truths that men cannot discover; they must be revealed by God. These insights are crucial for a true understanding of God's eternal plan for the redemption of all people (cf. Gen. 3:15).

▣ **"kingdom of God"** See note at 1:15.

▣ **"but those who are outside"** The Holy Spirit and personal receptivity are both needed to understand spiritual truth. Those who reject the Spirit commit the sin of 3:29. Parables had the dual purpose of hiding truth (cf. Matt. 11:25-27) and clearly revealing truth (cf. Luke 10:29 and the parable that follows). The heart of the hearer is the key.

**4:12** This quote is from an Aramaic Targum of Isa. 6:9. The Matthean parallel from the Septuagint quotes both Isa. 6:9 and 10. Isaiah's preaching was rejected by the hard-headed Israelites he addressed in the eighth century B.C. Jesus' hearers in the first century A.D. similarly rejected His teaching. SUBJUNCTIVE VERBS dominate this quote, which shows the volitional contingency on the part of the hearers.

Although Mark is writing to Gentiles, probably Romans, he often alludes to OT texts (cf. 1:2-3; 2:25-26; 4:12; 10:6-8,19; 12:26,29-31,36).

▣ **"they might return"** This was the OT (i.e., *shub*, BDB 996) term for repentance.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:13-20**

<sup>13</sup>And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? <sup>14</sup>The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup>These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. <sup>16</sup>In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; <sup>17</sup>and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. <sup>18</sup>And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, <sup>19</sup>but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

**4:13** **"Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"** This statement is unique to Mark, but shows that Jesus expected the disciples to understand. His family did not understand, the crowds did not understand, the religious leaders did not understand, and even the disciples, without special attention and explanation, did not understand.

This parable is a paradigm for the others. Here are several key principles for interpreting parables:

1. take note of the historical and literary contexts
2. identify the central truth
3. do not push the details
4. check the Gospel parallels
5. look for the unexpected twist or culturally surprising statement which will be the call to action based on the new kingdom ethic

**4:14** The seed refers to gospel proclamation. Matthew's parallel (cf. 13:19) calls it "the word of the Kingdom."

**4:15** **"Satan"** This robbery of truth is expressed so clearly in II Cor. 4:4. The Matthew parallel (cf. Matt. 13:19) adds that "they do not understand it," then Satan takes it out of the mind and heart so they don't think more about it. See Special Topic at 1:13.

▣ **“takes away”** This Greek term *airō* can mean (1) to destroy (cf. John 11:48) or (2) to take a person’s life (cf. Luke 23:18; Acts 12:19); no word, no life!

**4:16 “when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy”** Initial acceptance of a truth is not the only criterion (cf. vv. 17 and 19). Biblical faith is not based on a past emotional decision, but on a growing relationship. Salvation is not a fire insurance policy or a ticket to heaven, but a restored “image of God,” which allows intimate, daily fellowship with God. A joyful germination is no substitute for a fruit-bearing relationship (cf. v. 20).

**4:17 “and they have no firm root in themselves”** This parallels John’s use of believe in 8:30ff.

▣ **“when affliction or persecution arises”** Perseverance is the evidence of true faith.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Let me illustrate.

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a lifetime commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or mankind’s believing and repentant response to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem begins with apparently conflicting passages of the NT:

A. texts on assurance

1. statements of Jesus (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
2. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
3. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)

B. texts on the need for perseverance

1. statements of Jesus (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:4-10; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21)
2. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23)
3. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
4. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9)
5. statement of the Father (Rev. 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus’ death dealt with the fallen creation’s sin problem. God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject from a non-Calvinistic perspective, see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible is addressing two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives and (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings! Which group are you in?

▣ **“because of the word”** Notice that persecution is related to the gospel (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; I Pet. 2:11-12,21; 3:14-17; 4:12-16). God’s Son, God’s word, and God’s people are targets in a fallen world.

**4:18** The third kind of soil refers to those who hear the word, but external problems (cf. v. 19) cause it (i.e., the seed – the word) to die. Notice the clear difference between germination and fruit-bearing! A good start does not win the race, but a good finish (cf. John 15; Hebrews 11).

**4:19 “worries of the world and deceitfulness of riches”** These refer to the temptations of this fallen world (or age).

**4:20 “thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold”** The amount is not as significant as the fruit bearing!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:21-25**

<sup>21</sup>And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? <sup>22</sup>For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. <sup>23</sup>If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." <sup>24</sup>And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. <sup>25</sup>For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

**4:21 “lamp”** The first two questions of v. 21 grammatically expect a “no” answer. Light is meant to illuminate. Belief is meant to bear fruit. This paragraph explains why many did not understand Jesus’ parables. The parables are meant to illumine, but human’s evil hearts and motives, not God, block the light. God wants to communicate (cf. v. 22).

Jesus, in light of the immediate context, must be speaking of the future proclamation of the full gospel after His resurrection and ascension. The recurring Messianic Secret of Mark, the concealing of truth caused by the use of parables, and the lack of understanding on the part of the inner circle of disciples demands this be seen in a future context (i.e., post-Pentecost).

▣ **“basket”** This was a container holding about a peck or two gallons of dry measure. This term is a Latinism, probably confirming that Mark’s Gospel was written for Romans.

▣ **“a bed”** Literally this is “pallet.” This was used not only for sleeping (cf. 7:30), but for a cushion while eating in a reclining position.

▣ **“lampstand”** This could refer to several different ways by which lights were positioned so as to give off the most illumination: (1) an out-cropping in the wall; (2) a hanger on the wall; or (3) some type of pedestal.

**4:23 “if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. Jesus is assuming that some (eventually) will understand His person, mission, and promises.

**4:24-25** This states a spiritual principle. The gospel message is scattered abroad; the key to growth is the type of soil on which it falls. Mankind’s openness to spiritual truth is crucial. This not only refers to initial response but continuing response. A shallow, emotional response will be rejected.

**4:24 “Take care what you listen to”** This refers to the personal acceptance or rejection of Jesus. The rabbis believed that the mind was a plowed garden ready for seed. What we let our eyes see and ears hear (cf. vv. 9,23) takes root. We become what we dwell on, focus on, make priority!

▣ **“by your standard of measure it will be measured to you”** This verse has nothing to do with financial giving, but with spiritual discernment. This truth is also expressed in Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:36-37; James 2:13; 5:9. This is not a works righteousness, but the truth that how one acts reveals his heart. Believers have a new heart and a new family.

**4:25** When it comes to the gospel, it continues to give and give to those who have responded, but to those who reject it, it leaves nothing! Jesus is using a paradoxical proverb (cf. 4:22,25; 6:4; 8:35; 10:43-44). This was typical of near eastern teachers.

This passage employs a PASSIVE construction, which is probably a circumlocution for God. God is the unexpressed agent of the action.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:26-29**

<sup>26</sup>And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; <sup>27</sup>and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. <sup>28</sup>The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

**4:26 “seed”** This parable is unique to Mark. Because of verse 14 we know this refers to the gospel message. Growth is a result of good seed and good soil. This is the divine and human aspects of covenant.

**4:27-29** This may reflect salvation as a process (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15; II Pet. 3:18). This parable describes the mysterious and amazing growth of faith in the life of the fallen children of Adam. The goal is fruit!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION**

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun (i.e., a gate, then a road! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven but a life of growing Christlikeness.

#### **SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST)**

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)

#### **SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT)**

- Ephesians 2:5,8

#### **SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT)**

- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15

#### **SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)**

- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13 (implied in Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13)
- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5
- Philippians 1:28; I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28

**4:29 “puts in the sickle”** This is a metaphor for the end-time harvesting. It refers to judgment day (cf. Joel 3:13; Matt. 3:12; 13:30).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:30-32**

<sup>30</sup>And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? <sup>31</sup>*It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,* <sup>32</sup>*yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR CAN NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."*

**4:30** This is paralleled in Matt. 13:31-32.

**4:31 “a mustard seed”** The rabbis said it was the smallest of seeds. Yet the bush grew to over twelve feet tall. This parable parallels the one above. Spiritual growth may start small, but the results are enormous! As the seed of the gospel grows in the heart of an individual into Christlikeness, so too, the kingdom of God grows into a universal kingdom (cf. Matt. 13:33).

**4:32** The end of this verse may be an allusion to the huge trees in the OT texts of Ezek. 17:22-24 and Dan. 4:11-12 that represent a kingdom.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:33-34**

<sup>33</sup>With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; <sup>34</sup>and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

**4:33 “With many such parables He was speaking the word to them”** We only have recorded a small part of Jesus’ oral ministry (cf. John 21:25). All of us wish we had more of Jesus’ teachings and actions (cf. John 20:30), but we need to realize that we have everything we need to know about God, sin, life, death, etc (cf. John 20:31). We must act on what we have been given. These two verses are parallel to Matt. 13:33-35.

▣ **“so far as they were able to hear it”** This refers to their spiritual receptivity (cf. vv. 9,23). Believers today have the benefit of the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us understand Jesus’ words.

**4:34** This reflects the previous statements of 4:10-12 and 13.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:35-41**

<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup>Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. <sup>37</sup>And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. <sup>38</sup>Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup>And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. <sup>40</sup>And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" <sup>41</sup>They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

**4:35-41** This begins an extended context of miracles, 4:35-8:26. Jesus confirmed His message by showing His power. This specific event is paralleled in Matt. 8:18,23-27 and Luke 8:22-25.

**4:36** This verse has several odd features not found in the parallels.

1. What does “just as He was” mean? TEV translates it “the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting.” This seems to be the best option.
2. What does “and other boats were with Him” refer to? Was the apostolic group in several small boats or did other boats also find themselves in the storm?

These are obviously eye-witness details (i.e., Peter’s), but their purpose and implications are uncertain.

**4:37 “And there arose a fierce gale of wind”** Sudden violent storms are common on the Sea of Galilee because of the surrounding hills and its being situated below sea level. This must have been a particularly bad storm because even the seasoned fishermen among them became afraid.

**4:38** This event was obviously used to depict Jesus’ calm and the disciples’ fear of current circumstances. The question about Jesus’ care is a universal one. If God is loving and all powerful, why do believers face the threatening trials of life?

▣ **perishing”** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 3:6.

**4:39** This powerfully demonstrated the power and authority of Jesus—even inanimate forces of nature obey Him.

▣ **“Hush, be still”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE followed by a PERFECT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus, as God the Father’s agent of creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), had, and has, power over it (cf. Ps. 33:7; 65:2; 147:18).

**4:40** This is a good question for all believers in every situation. Jesus is teaching His disciples by word and deed.

**4:41** This verse clearly displays the theological infancy of the Apostles. The context contrasts several types of unbelief: (1) His family’s; (2) the religious leaders’; and (3) the disciples’. Numbers 1 and 3 are spiritually growing. Their unbelief is based on ignorance, but number 2 is willful. They are given sign after sign, truth after truth, but because of preexisting biases the religious leaders not only refuse to believe, but attribute Jesus’ actions and teachings to Satan’s power! This is the unpardonable sin!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this parable (vv. 3-5) so important in interpreting all others?
2. How is the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free-will dealt with in this passage?
3. Give the central truth of these:
  - a. vv. 21-23
  - b. vv. 24-25
  - c. vv. 28-29
  - d. vv. 30-32
4. What is the basic truth of all these parables? (Remember context)
5. List the three groups in this context that do not believe.

# MARK 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac	A Demon-Possessed Man Healed	The Gerasene Demoniac	Jesus Heals a Man with Evil Spirit	The Gerasene Demoniac
5:1-10	5:1-20	5:1-13	5:1-5	5:1-20
			5:6-8	
			5:9a	
			5:9b-10	
5:11-20			5:11-13	
		5:14-20	5:14-16	
			5:17	
			5:18	
			5:19	
			5:20	
Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment	A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed	Jairus' Daughter Raised	Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Cloak	Cure of the Woman with a Hemorrhage-The Daughter of Jairus Raised to Life
5:21-24a	5:21-43	5:21-24a	5:21-23	5:21-24
			5:24	
5:24b-34		5:24b-34		
			5:25-28	5:25-34
			5:29-30	
			5:31	
			5:32-34	
5:35-43		5:35-43	5:35	5:35-43
			5:36-39	
			5:40-41	
			5:42-43	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 5:1-43

This chapter is designed to show a typical day in Jesus' life during this public period of His ministry. Jesus' power and authority are demonstrated by

- A. Gedarene Demoniac, paralleled in Matt. 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39  
Verses 1-20 (Shows Jesus' power over the spiritual realm)
- B. Jairus' daughter, paralleled in Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26 and Luke 8:40-42, 49-56  
Verses 21-24, 35-43 (Shows Jesus' power over death)
- C. Woman with a hemorrhage, paralleled in Matt. 9:20-22 and Luke 8:43-48  
Verses 25-34 (Shows Jesus' power over disease)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-13

<sup>1</sup>They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup>When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, <sup>3</sup>and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; <sup>4</sup>because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup>Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. <sup>6</sup>Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; <sup>7</sup>and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" <sup>8</sup>For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" <sup>9</sup>And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." <sup>10</sup>And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. <sup>11</sup>Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. <sup>12</sup>The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." <sup>13</sup>Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

**5:1 "They came to the other side of the sea"** It was probably still night (cf. 4:35). The disciples had to row the boat since Jesus had completely calmed the winds.

▣ **"into the country of the Gerasenes"** This is the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee, called Decapolis. This area was mostly Gentile and very Hellenistic. The Synoptic Gospels vary on the spelling: Gerasa (MSS  $\aleph^*$ , B, D, and Luke 8:26), Gergesa (MSS  $\aleph^2$ , L), Gergusta (MS W), or Gadara (MSS A, C, and Matt. 8:28). All of these were towns in this area.

**5:2 "When He got out"** Maybe the disciples heard the screaming (v. 5) and were glad to let Jesus go first!

▣ **"immediately"** See note at 1:10.

▣ **"a man"** Matt. 8:28ff has two men. Matthew also has two blind men outside of Jericho (cf. Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). This is a characteristic of Matthew's Gospel. Mark and Luke agree there was only one demoniac (cf. Luke 8:26ff). For further discussion see *Hard Sayings of the Bible* pp. 321-322.



▣ **“from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him”** This is an obvious account of demon possession. The NT does not discuss the origin of the demonic or the detailed procedures on how to deal with them. Exorcism is never listed as a gift of the Spirit. See Special Topics: The Demonic and Exorcism at 1:25.

**5:3 “dwelling among the tombs”** They had landed in the area of a local graveyard. The local people had driven a possessed lunatic into this remote area. It had become his home.

▣ **“no one was able to bind him anymore”** He had supernatural strength.

**5:4 “he had often been bound with shackles and chains”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INFINITIVE. Apparently the town’s people had attempted to chain him. He was a well known local problem.

▣ **“had been torn apart by him”** This also shows his supernatural strength.

**5:5 “screaming. . .gashing himself with stones”** This behavior may be linked to expressions of self destruction or to OT pagan worship practices (cf. I Kgs. 18:28). The graphic information about this man’s regular behavior must have come from the villagers.

**5:6 “he ran up and bowed down before Him”** The first term implies hostility. The second implies respect and acknowledgment of Jesus’ position and authority (cf. v. 4b).

**5:7 “shouting with a loud voice he said, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God’”** One of the demons addresses Jesus. They knew who He was (cf. 1:23; James 2:19). They even address Him with a Messianic phrase. In this case, their motive is fear (unlike 1:23).

▣ **“I implore You by God”** This was a Hebrew idiom that means “to swear to God.”

▣ **“do not torment me”** This is grammatically either an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE of prohibition or an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE functioning as an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which implies “never start an action” (cf. Barbara and Timothy Friberg’s *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 120). The demonic knew that judgment was coming (cf. 1:23-24; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9; 20:10). The parallels in Matt. 8:29 and Luke 8:28 and 31 also imply eschatological judgment. These demons apparently did not know about the two comings of the Messiah. Even “spirits” can suffer!

**5:8,9 “had been saying”** The IMPERFECT TENSE was used primarily in two ways: (1) repeated action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action in past time. In this context only #2 appears to fit. However, if the order of Jesus’ statements to the demonic are out of chronological order, then #1 may apply. Mark may be using the tense in a colloquial way because the same tense is also in v. 10.

**5:9 “What is your name”** This question could be a Hebraic idiom and refer to their characteristics.

▣ **“Legion”** In the Roman Army 6,000 troops made up a Legion. This is another of the many Latin terms used in Mark. This may have been a metaphor of the degree of their control over the man. However, because of v. 13, which describes the demons causing the death of 2,000 hogs, it may be literal.

**5:10 “out of the country”** This could refer to (1) the area of the tombs; (2) the Decapolis district; or (3) possibly to the Abyss, which is recorded in the parable of Luke 8:31. The Matthew parallel has “before the appointed time” (cf. Matt. 8:29).

**25:11** The herd of swine shows it was a Gentile area.

**5:12 “Send us into the swine”** Notice that the demons made a request to Jesus. The text does not tell us why Jesus allowed these demons to go into the hogs or why they wanted to. Possibly the demons leaving the man and entering the hogs was a visible way to encourage the man to believe that he was delivered (i.e., a visual aid, similar to putting spit and mud into blind eyes). The demons may have requested it because (1) they preferred hogs to the abyss or (2) this action would cause the townspeople to ask Jesus to leave. Demons do not do things to help Jesus!

**5:13 “they were drowned”** This is IMPERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. They ran off the cliff one after another!

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:14-20

<sup>14</sup>Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. <sup>15</sup>They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. <sup>16</sup>Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. <sup>17</sup>And they began to implore Him to leave their region. <sup>18</sup>As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. <sup>19</sup>And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you." <sup>20</sup>And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

**5:14 "And the people came to see what it was that had happened"** Curiosity and fear motivates the town's people to come, even at night.

**5:15 "sitting down"** This is the first in a series of conditions which describe this man's new peace and composure.

▣ **"clothed"** This implies he was normally unclothed (cf. Luke 8:27).

▣ **"in his right mind"** Demonic possession manifests itself in many ways

1. cannot speak (Mark 9:17,25; Matt. 9:32)
2. cannot speak or see (Matt. 12:22)
3. epilepsy (Matt. 17:15,18)
4. great strength (Mark 5:3-4)
5. convulsions (Mark 1:26; 9:20)
6. paralysis (Acts 8:17)

However, not all physical problems are of demonic origin. In the Gospels illness and possession are often differentiated (cf. Mark 1:32,34; 6:13; Matt. 4:24; 10:8; Luke 4:40-41; 9:1; 13:32).

**5:17 "they began to implore Him to leave their region"** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE and a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE. This rejection was one possible reason the demons wanted to enter the hogs! The townspeople wanted the One who calmed the man that none of them could calm to leave. How different is the village of John 4. Apparently economic concerns outweighed this man's restoration.

**5:19 "Go home to your people"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus was telling him to go back home. Jesus knew the presence of an apparently Gentile follower would alienate some Jewish people. By staying Jesus now had a witness in this Gentile area. He still cared for these materialists!

▣ **"and report to them"** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Share with your people what God has done for you. Apparently he did this well (cf. v. 20). This shows Jesus' care for Gentiles.

**5:20 "Decapolis"** This Greek word means "ten cities." It was a confederacy going back to Alexander the Great. This region was north of Perea and east of the Sea of Galilee. It was a haven of Hellenistic culture.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21-24

<sup>21</sup>When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. <sup>22</sup>One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet <sup>23</sup>and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." <sup>24</sup>And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.

**5:22 "One of the synagogue officials named Jairus"** His name means "YHWH has enlightened." This was the person in charge of administrative tasks like the maintenance of a synagogue building. He would have been a man of some religious standing in the community.

▣ **"fell at His feet"** This was a gesture of reverence as well as worship (cf. 5:6,22,33 where different words are used, but the same gesture). An Oriental leader prostrate in the street before an unofficial rabbi would have been very unexpected!

▣ **“My little daughter is at the point of death”** Matthew 9:18 says she had died. This man believed that Jesus’ presence and touch would heal/restore his daughter.

5:23

NASB, TEV	“she will get well”
NKJV	“she will be healed”
NRSV	“she may get well”
NJB	“she may be saved”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE of the term *sōzō*, used in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15). In the NT it takes on the sense of spiritual salvation. It is theologically uncertain whether all of the ones Jesus healed were spiritually saved. His actions may have started a process that culminated later in the person’s spiritual life and is not recorded in Scripture.

As an example look at this chapter where the demoniac’s faith is seen after his being healed, not before. The young girl is helped because of her father’s faith and the woman with a bleeding problem was willing to make Jesus ceremonially unclean in a selfish (even superstitious) act of touching a rabbi. Where does self-interest end and faith begin?

5:24 **“pressing in on Him”** Luke 8:42 adds that the press of the crowd was so great that it was at the point of being hard to breathe.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:25-34**

<sup>25</sup>A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, <sup>26</sup>and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse — <sup>27</sup>after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. <sup>28</sup>For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” <sup>29</sup>Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. <sup>30</sup>Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?” <sup>31</sup>And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” <sup>32</sup>And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. <sup>33</sup>But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”

5:25 **“hemorrhage for twelve years”** This would have made her ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:25-27) and, therefore, excluded her from all forms of Jewish worship (i.e., synagogue and temple).

5:26 **“and had endured much at the hands of many physicians”** Luke, the physician, leaves this comment out in Luke 8:43ff.

▣ **“had spent all she had and was not helped at all”** The Jewish cures for this problem listed in the Talmud were (1) carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag around one’s neck in summer and in a cotton rag in winter or (2) carrying barley corn from the dung of a white female donkey (cf. Shabb. 110 A & B).

5:27 **“touched His cloak”** Probably what she touched was His prayer shawl, used by men for covering their heads during worship. It was called the Tallith (cf. Num. 15:38-40; Deut. 22:12). For a ceremonially unclean woman to touch a rabbi was an inappropriate act. This woman was desperate!

5:30 **“Immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“Jesus perceiving in Himself that the power”** The exact nature of this power is uncertain. It was obviously from God (cf. Luke 5:17). Jesus felt its affect. Jesus was able to bestow it to others in the missions of the Twelve and the seventy.

▣ **“proceeding from Him had gone forth”** Matthew 8:17 quotes Isa. 53:4 that the Messiah would heal us because He bore our infirmities.

▣ **“Who touched My garments”** There was a great crowd (cf. v. 31). Matthew 9:20 has “tassel.” The prayer shawl had thirteen blue tassels, commemorative of the Mosaic Law.

5:32 **“And He looked around”** This IMPERFECT TENSE implies He began to look over the crowd. On this occasion Jesus was not supernaturally informed about who or what had happened. Possibly the question was meant for the woman (i.e., an opportunity to publicly express her faith).

**5:33 “fearing and trembling”** Women had such a low place in society. She was reluctant to speak in public. She also knew that since she was ceremonially unclean she was not permitted to touch a rabbi.

**5:34 “Daughter”** The teachings of Jesus reveal the profound truth that human beings, through faith in Jesus, can become family members of God. Salvation is described in birthing or legal terms, indicating a family relationship. What powerful metaphors for the Christian experience!

☐ **“your faith has made you well”** Not her touch, but acting on her faith in Him was the key. Faith itself is not the issue, but the object of faith (i.e., Jesus). There was nothing magical here, nor was it the power of positive thinking, but the power of Jesus. This is another use of the Greek *sōzō* in its OT sense (cf. v. 23). Here it is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implied she was healed and remained healed of the physical problem.

☐ **“go in peace and be healed of your affliction”** These are both PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. The term peace (*eirēnē*) has the connotation of wholeness and well-being, not just the absence of problems. The term “affliction” is from the root “to whip.”

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:35-43**

<sup>35</sup>While He was still speaking, they came from the *house of the synagogue official*, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?" <sup>36</sup>But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, only believe." <sup>37</sup>And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup>They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. <sup>39</sup>And entering in, He said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." <sup>40</sup>They *began* laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered *the room* where the child was. <sup>41</sup>Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). <sup>42</sup>Immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. <sup>43</sup>And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that *something* should be given her to eat.

**5:35 “has died”** This is AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. I am sure Jairus was very impatient! This seems to be a test of his faith or another example of Jesus' power and authority.

#### **5:36**

NASB	“overhearing what was being spoken”
NKJV	“as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken”
NRSV, NJB	“overhearing what they said”
TEV	“Jesus paid no attention to what they said”
NIV	“ignoring what they said”

The Greek root means “to hear carelessly.” It can be understood as “ignore” or “overhear.” This term is so ambiguous that very early the scribes changed it to the term “hear” (cf. MSS  $\aleph^a$ , A, C, D, and K), which is found in the Lukan parallel, 8:50.

☐ **“Do not be afraid *any longer*”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act in process. The opposite of fear is faith!

☐ **“only believe”** This is another PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Such a simple, but crucial, statement (cf. Acts 16:31).

**5:37 “He allowed no one to accompany Him”** Why Jesus had an inner group of disciples (cf. 1:29; 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33) is uncertain. Mark's Gospel is the eyewitness account of Peter. This inner circle provided no special privileges because James was killed very early.

Jesus did not want His fame as a healer and even one who could raise the dead to be known. This is one of several of these types of statements in Mark, which theologians call “the Messianic Secret” (cf. v. 43). He already had major logistical problems with the large crowds.

☐ **“Peter and James and John”** This was Jesus' inner circle of disciples (cf. 9:2; 14:33; Matt. 17:1; 26:37; Luke 9:28).

**5:38 “and *people* loudly weeping and wailing”** These were common, even expected, Jewish funeral practices. It shows that the family was expecting the death of the little daughter and had already made preparations.

**5:39 “The child has not died, but is asleep”** Sleep was an OT euphemism for death. Jesus uses it of Lazarus in John 11:11. Here it is contrasted with death. One wonders if v. 37 is thought to be a reference to “Mark’s Messianic Secret” then why did He say this to the crowd, unless He is trying to reduce the impact (i.e., the resulting rumors) of her being raised?

**5:40 “began laughing at Him”** This is an IMPERFECT tense which implies the bystanders continued to laugh for an extended period of time or that they started laughing at this point.

▣ **“His own companions”** This refers to Peter, James, and John. In many ways Jesus’ miracles were as much for the disciples’ training and faith as for the people helped!

**5:41 “Talitha, kum”** This is an Aramaic phrase. The Jews of Jesus’ day spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. This would have been Jesus’ mother tongue. There are several Aramaic phrases recorded in the Gospels (cf. *Sabbata*, 3:4; *Boanerges*, 3:17; *Satan*, 3:23,26; 8:33; *Talitha cumi*, 5:41; *Ephphatha*, 7:35; *Gehanna*, 9:43,45,47; *pascha*, 14:14; *Abba*, 14:36; *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, 15:34). The fact that Mark translates it shows his target audience was Gentile.

**5:42 “Immediately. . .immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“she was twelve years old”** This would have meant she was responsible to keep the law (i.e., *bath mitzvah*) and was of marriageable age. Boys became responsible to the Law and marriageable at age thirteen (i.e., *bar mitzvah*). The life expectancy was much shorter and generations of families lived together; therefore, they married much younger than today.

**5:43 “gave them strict orders that no one should know about this”** Jesus did not want to be known as a healer or miracle worker. He did these activities to reveal God’s compassion and validate His message and authority (cf. Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26,30; 9:30; Matt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 17:9).

▣ **“He said that something should be given her to eat”** This is another eyewitness detail. Jesus shows thoughtfulness for the little girl. This also proves she is truly restored to physical life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is demon possession? Can it occur today? Can Christians be affected?
2. Why did Jesus let the hogs be destroyed?
3. Why did the local townspeople send Jesus away?
4. Why did the demoniac have to stay?
5. What does it mean “power had gone out?”
6. Why does Jesus call the dead, “sleeping?”
7. Why does Jesus want to keep the raising of Jairus’ daughter a secret?
8. Why did Jesus have an inner circle of disciples?

# MARK 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth 6:1-6a	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth 6:1-6	Rejection at Home 6:1-6a	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth 6:1-3 6:4 6:5-6a	A Visit to Nazareth 6:1-6a
The Mission of the Twelve 6:6b-13	Sending Out the Twelve 6:7-13	Commissioning and Instructions of the Twelve 6:6b-13	Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples 6:6b-11 6:12-13	The Mission of the Twelve 6:6b-13
The Death of John the Baptist 6:14-29	John the Baptist Beheaded 6:14-29	Death of John 6:14-16 6:17-29	The Death of John the Baptist 6:14 6:15a 6:15b 6:16-18 6:19-20 6:21-23 6:24a 6:24b 6:25 6:26-29	Herod and Jesus 6:14-16 John the Baptist Beheaded 6:17-20 6:21-29
The Feeding of the Five Thousand 6:30-44	Feeding the Five Thousand 6:30-44	Five Thousand Fed 6:30-44	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand 6:30-32 6:33-36 6:37a 6:37b 6:38a 6:38b 6:39-44	First Miracle of the Loaves 6:30-44
Walking On Water 6:45-52	Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:45-52	Jesus Walks on Water 6:45-46	Jesus Walks on the Water 6:45-50a	Jesus Walks On the Water 6:45-52

6:47-52				
			6:50b-52	
The Healing of the Sick in Gennesaret	Many Touch Him and Are Made Well	Belief in Jesus' Power to Heal	Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret	Cures at Gennesaret
6:53-56	6:53-56	6:53-56	6:53-56	6:53-56

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. Verses 1-6a are paralleled in Matt. 13:54-58.
- B. Verses 6b-13 are paralleled in Matt. 9:35-11:1 and Luke 9:1-6.
- C. Verses 14-29 are paralleled in Matt. 14:1-12 and vv. 14-16 and in Luke 9:7-9.
- D. Verses 30-44, which is the feeding of the five thousand, is found in all four Gospels (Mark 6:30-44; Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13).
- E. Verses 45-52 are paralleled in Matt. 14:22-23 and John 6:14-21.
- F. Verses 53-56 are paralleled in Matt. 14:34-36.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-6a

<sup>1</sup>Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup>When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? <sup>3</sup>Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. <sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household." <sup>5</sup>And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup>And He wondered at their unbelief.

**6:1 "Jesus went out from there"** This refers to Capernaum, which had become His Galilean headquarters.

▣ **“came into His hometown”** This is literally “his native place” and refers to Nazareth (cf. 1:9,24), where He grew up. It was twenty miles southeast of Capernaum. Apparently it was a recent settlement of Judeans.

▣ **“and His disciples followed Him”** Jesus trained His disciples by taking them with Him at all times (see Robert Coleman’s *The Master Plan of Evangelism*). Much of Jesus’ teachings and miracles were for their benefit.

**6:2 “to teach in the synagogue”** Jesus regularly attended synagogue. He was often invited to speak as a guest teacher, which was a common practice.

▣ **“the many listeners were astonished”** They did not disagree with His teachings, but questioned His qualifications and schooling. This is similar to the Pharisees questioning His authority.

▣ **““Where did this man get these things””** Jesus’ wisdom, power, and authority surprised everyone. As a child Jesus was just like the other village children. Different groups kept asking where these attributes came from? It was obvious to all that Jesus had great wisdom and authority!

▣ **“such miracles as these performed by His hands”** Capernaum was only 20 miles from Nazareth so word of His miracles had spread.

**6:3 ““Is not this the carpenter””** The word for carpenter means “craftsman” which can mean a worker in wood, metal, or stone. Justin said it referred to someone who made ploughs and yokes (i.e., *Dial.* 88:8). Apparently Jesus had become the town carpenter after Joseph’s untimely death.

▣ **““the son of Mary””** Like “this man” of v. 2, this may have been an attempt to show contempt. The townspeople would have known of Mary’s pregnancy. Origen says the original text read “the son of the carpenter and Mary” because it was so highly unusual for the mother to be mentioned. Because of John 8:41 some see this related to the widely spread rumor that Jesus was an illegitimate child of a Roman soldier. Most of the MSS variations are based on the theological bias of copyists who may have feared that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth was being comprised by the Matthean parallel phrase “the son of the carpenter and Mary” (cf. Matt. 13:55).

▣ **““the brother of””** This shows the normal childhood of Jesus (cf. Luke 2:40,52). It also shows Mary had other children. Of this list of brothers and sisters (cf. Matt. 13:55-56), two, James and Jude, are NT authors.

▣  
NASB      **“they took offense at Him”**  
NKJV      **“they were offended at Him”**  
NRSV      **“they took offense at him”**  
TEV        **“they rejected him”**  
NJB        **“they would not accept him”**

This is the term *skandalon*, which meant a baited trap stick. We get the English term “scandal” from this Greek term.

This concept had great OT Messianic significance (cf. Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16). Just like the religious leaders the townspeople could not overcome their bias (cf. v. 4).

**6:4 “A prophet”** Verse 4 was a popular proverb of Jesus’ day. Jesus was surely more than a prophet, but that was one of the titles used by Moses of God’s special coming One (cf. Deut. 18:15,18).

**6:5 “He could do no miracles there”** This does not imply weakness on Jesus’ part, but willful limiting of His ministry. The Matt. 13:58 parallel has “did not” instead of “could not.” Jesus was not a respecter of persons; He had no favorites. Luke 7:11-14 shows that Jesus did not always demand a faith response, but it was the normal prerequisite. Faith in God and in Jesus opens the door to the spiritual realm. How much faith is not as important as in whom it is placed!

▣ **“He laid His hands on a few sick people”** See Special Topic at 7:32.

**6:6a**  
NASB      **“He wondered at their unbelief”**  
NKJV      **“He marveled because of their unbelief”**  
NRSV      **“he was amazed at their unbelief”**



TEV           **“He was greatly surprised, because the people did not have faith”**  
NJB           **“he was amazed at their lack of faith”**

This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, implying repeated action. Jesus was amazed by the peoples’ blindness and hardness (Jesus was rejected twice in Nazareth, cf. Luke 4:16-31). In the presence of great truth, even miraculous signs (cf. v. 2), they refused to believe (cf. Isa. 6:9-10).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:6b-13**

<sup>6b</sup>And He was going around the villages teaching. <sup>7</sup>And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; <sup>8</sup>and He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—<sup>9</sup>but to wear sandals; and *He added*, “Do not put on two tunics.” <sup>10</sup>And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. <sup>11</sup>Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup>They went out and preached that *men* should repent. <sup>13</sup>And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

**6:7 “began to send them out in pairs”** This word may reflect a specific mission and not a universal charge.

▣ **“in pairs”** This may refer to the two witnesses needed to confirm a matter (cf. Deut. 19:15). It may even be the sociological aspect of courage in numbers. These two witnesses faced a hostile spiritual and cultural world.

▣ **“and gave them authority over the unclean spirits”** The parallel in Luke 9:1 adds “and to heal diseases.” The parallel in Matt. 10:8 adds “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” All of these acts are OT Messianic signs, signs of God’s care, signs of God’s power and His future kingdom. See Special Topic at 1:25.

Jesus’ power and authority can be delegated to His followers. Surely there is an intensity shared between the Twelve and Jesus that cannot be duplicated, but God’s power is available to His church. Where is the power in our day? It seems that these power signs are used to confirm the gospel message and give credence to the gospel preacher. This is still true today. However, in cultures where the gospel message has taken root, then believers must walk by faith, not by sight; trust in God, not demand miracles (cf. John 4:48). Miracles are not the answer to faith problems! It is also very possible that the judgment of God on a lukewarm church is the perception of success, but the reality of ineffectiveness.

Signs and miracles as well as demonic and angelic activity increased in Jesus’ and the Apostles’ day. This spiritual activity is surely present in every age, but intensified at Jesus’ first coming and will intensify again as His second coming draws near.

I rejoice in the manifestations of signs of God’s love and power (i.e., the gifts are still active), but I trust in gospel truths, not the presence or absence of physical confirmations. Miracles and signs can be counterfeit (cf. Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 19:20). Believers must not demand confirmation! Childlike faith is spiritually superior to supernatural signs and wonders.

**6:8 “He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff”** The Synoptic Gospels all record this, but in slightly different ways. Matthew 10:9-11 implies “do not purchase another walking stick.” Luke 9:3 is similar to Matt. 10:10, but omits the phrase “do not acquire” of Matt. 10:9. All travelers carried a staff for protection. The point of these statements is that these missionaries must depend totally on God’s provision (both physically and spiritually) and not their own.

For a full discussion of the discrepancies between Matthew, Mark, and Luke concerning what the disciples are to take and not take on their mission trip see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 422-24.

▣ **“bag”** This is possibly a knapsack.

▣ **“money in their belt”** This possibly means a money belt.

**6:9 “Do not put on two tunics”** This refers to an outer cloak which was also used as a covering for sleeping. This means do not take extra clothes (i.e., do not try to prepare for every contingency).

**6:10 “stay there until you leave”** They were not to look for better and better accommodations. The first place that by faith opens their home was the place to stay.

**6:11 “Any place that does not receive you or listen to you”** “Any place” could refer to a city or a synagogue. This is literally the term “receives,” but with the implication of welcome.

▣ **“shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them”** This involves a visual symbol of impending judgment and separation (cf. Acts 13:51; and a similar act in 18:6). This was a regular Jewish custom when re-entering Judah from Samaria.

▣ There is an additional sentence in v. 11, NKJV, “Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.” It is found in manuscript A and many later Greek minuscule manuscripts. It is not original to Mark, but seems to be an assimilation from Matt. 10:15.

**6:12 “they. . . preached that *men* should repent”** Repentance is crucial for a faith relationship with God (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:21). The term in Hebrew meant a change of actions, while in Greek it meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change from one’s self-centered existence to a life informed and directed by God. It calls for a turning from the priority and bondage of the self. Basically it is a new attitude, a new world view, a new master. Repentance is God’s will for every human being, made in His image (cf. Ezek. 18:21,23,32; Luke 13:1-5; and II Pet. 3:9).

The NT passage that best reflects the different Greek terms for repentance is II Cor. 7:8-12

1. *lupe*, “grief” or “sorrow” vv. 8 (twice), 9 (thrice), 10 (twice), 11
2. *metamelomai*, “after care,” vv. 8 (twice), 9
3. *metanoeō*, “repent,” “after mind,” vv. 9, 10

The contrast is false repentance [*metamelomai*], cf. Judas, Matt. 27:3 and Esau, Heb. 12:16-17 vs. true repentance [*metanoeō*].

True repentance is theologically linked to

1. Jesus’ preaching of the conditions of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5)
2. the apostolic sermons in Acts (i.e., the *kerygma*, cf. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)
3. God’s sovereign gift (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18 and II Tim. 2:25)
4. perishing (cf. II Pet. 3:9). Repentance is not optional

See Special Topic: Repentance at 1:4d.

**6:13 “casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people”** Notice the NT makes a distinction between illness and demon possession. See note at 1:25c.

▣ **“anointing them with oil”** Oil was used in different senses: (1) as medicine (cf. James 5:14); (2) as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, especially in the OT of kings, priests, and prophets; and (3) as a psychological aid to recognize God’s presence. Jesus used several different types of physical aids in healing.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)**

- A. Used for beautification (cf. Deut. 28:40; Ruth 3:3; II Sam. 12:20; 14:2; II Chr. 28:1-5; Dan. 10:3; Amos 6:6; Mic. 6:15)
- B. Used for guests (cf. Ps. 23:5; Luke 7:38,46; John 11:2)
- C. Used for healing (cf. Isa. 6:1; Jer. 51:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34; James 5:14) [used in hygienic sense in Ezek. 16:9]
- D. Used for preparation for burial (cf. Gen. 50:2; II Chr. 16:14; Mark 16:1; John 12:3,7; 19:39-40)
- E. Used in a religious sense (of an object, cf. Gen. 28:18,20; 31:13 [a pillar]; Exod. 29:36 [the altar]; Exod. 30:36; 40:9-16; Lev. 8:10-13; Num. 7:1 [the tabernacle])
- F. Used for installing leaders
  1. Priests
    - a. Aaron (Exod. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30)
    - b. Aaron’s sons (Exod. 40:15; Lev. 7:36)
    - c. standard phrase or title (Num. 3:3; Lev. 16:32)
  2. Kings
    - a. by God (cf. I Sam. 2:10; II Sam. 12:7; II Kgs. 9:3,6,12; Ps. 45:7; 89:20)
    - b. by the prophets (cf. I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1,17; 16:3,12-13; I Kgs. 1:45; 19:15-16)
    - c. by priests (cf. I Kgs. 1:34,39; II Kgs. 11:12)
    - d. by the elders (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; II Sam. 2:7; 5:3; II Kgs. 23:30)
    - e. of Jesus as Messianic king (cf. Ps. 2:2; Luke 4:18 [Isa. 61:1]; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9 [Ps. 45:7])
    - f. Jesus’ followers (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I John 2:20,27 [*chrisma*])

3. possibly of prophets (cf. Isa. 61:1)
4. unbelieving instruments of divine deliverance
  - a. Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
  - b. King of Tyre (cf. Ezek. 28:14, where he uses Edom metaphors)
5. term or title "Messiah" means "an Anointed One" (BDB 603)

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:14-16

<sup>14</sup>And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." <sup>15</sup>But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "*He* is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." <sup>16</sup>But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

**6:14 "King Herod"** "King" was not the official title of Herod Antipas. He was called Tetrarch, which meant "a rule by four." He was the son of Herod the Great and a Samaritan woman. He ruled Perea and Galilee between 4 B.C. and A.D. 39 when he was exiled for asking Caesar to make him a King.

See Special Topic on The Family of Herod the Great at 1:14.

▣ **"people were saying John the Baptist has risen from the dead"** This reflects the Pharisaic belief in a physical resurrection (cf. Acts 23:6; 24:21; Heb. 6:2). This was another attempt to explain away Jesus' power and authority (i.e., the religious leaders attribute it to Satan or the demonic; the hometown folks deny it because of their familiarity with Jesus' childhood; these people attribute it to John the Baptist or some other OT prophet).

**6:15 "Elijah"** This showed the Messianic implications of Jesus' ministry. This relates to the specific predictions in. Mal. 3:1-2 and 4:5-6.

▣ **"He is a prophet like one of the prophets of old"** This shows the people sensed a new authority in His teaching that had not been in Israel for hundreds of years, since Malachi (or the author of Chronicles). It also reflects the Mosaic Messianic prophecy of Deut. 18:15ff about the coming of a prophet like Moses.

**6:16 "whom I beheaded"** This shows Herod's guilty conscience (cf. Matt. 14:10; Luke 9:9) and lack of information about the relationship between John and Jesus.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:17-29

<sup>17</sup>For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. <sup>18</sup>For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup>Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; <sup>20</sup>for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. <sup>21</sup>A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; <sup>22</sup>and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." <sup>23</sup>And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom." <sup>24</sup>And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." <sup>25</sup>Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." <sup>26</sup>And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, <sup>28</sup>and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup>When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

**6:17-29** This is out of chronological sequence. It was inserted to explain v. 14.

**6:17 "Herodias"** She had been the wife of Philip, the brother of Herod Antipas (cf. Matt. 14:3). They had lived in Rome. She was also Antipas' niece through Aristobulus. Antipas had wooed her away from Philip and married her.

According to Josephus (i.e., *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.4), Herodias was married to Herod the Great's son, Herod (whose mother was Marianne, the high priest's daughter). He also says Herodias' daughter, Salome, later married Philip. It is possible that Herod was known as Herod Philip.

**6:18** This relationship violated Lev. 18:16; 20:21.

**6:19 “Herodias had a grudge against him”** This is IMPERFECT TENSE. She must have brought the subject up again and again to Herod Antipas. Herod kept (IMPERFECT TENSE) him safe from her (v. 20).

**6:20 “Herod was afraid of John”** This fear was because John was a holy man. Matthew 14:4 says he feared John's popularity with the people. Herod was a fearful person. He feared John, Herodias, and his guests—too bad he did not fear God!

**6:21** There are three groups of guests: (1) civil authorities; (2) military authorities; and (3) local wealthy and influential leaders.

▣ **“when he heard him”** Herod either called for John or went to his cell at Machaerus (i.e., on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 18.5.2).

▣ **“he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him”** This shows the paradox of a man drawn to the truth, yet rejecting the light (cf. John 3:19-21).

▣ Herodias waited until just the right moment—a public gathering, a drunken party, a lustful dance, and an outrageous promise—to force Herod's hand to do her bidding.

**6:22 “the daughter of Herodias”** She was called Salome by Josephus, the daughter of Philip.

▣ **“danced”** It was not common for woman of her social status to dance at this type of gathering. These sensual dances were usually done by prostitutes or professional dancers.

▣ **““Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you””** Herod said this in the presence of his administrative officials and could not take it back (cf. vv. 21,26).

**6:23 “he swore to her”** He used God's name to assure his believability.

**6:24** This verse confirms her mother's ulterior motives and plot (cf. 28b).

**6:26** Herod's need to impress his friends and family overshadowed his fear (*perilupos*, which implies exceeding sorrow, cf. Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34).

**6:27 “executioner”** This is a Latin term for his special bodyguards. It originally referred to a spy, but came to be used of an executioner (i.e., Seneca). Mark has more Latin terms and phrases than any other Gospel. It was probably written specifically to Romans.

▣ **“in the prison”** In *Antiquities* 18.5.2 Josephus tells us it was Herod's fort named Machaerus, which was near the Dead Sea in Moab.

**6:29** John the Baptist was obviously in the will of God. Yet his ministry only lasted about eighteen months. Although the actual cause of his death was the scheming of an evil woman, God is in control of history for His purposes. This verse also reflects the Jewish concern for a proper burial.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:30-44**

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) <sup>32</sup>They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>The *people* saw them going, and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup>When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; <sup>36</sup>send them away so that they may go into the surrounding

countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." <sup>37</sup>But He answered them, "You give them *something to eat!*" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something to eat?*" <sup>38</sup>And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." <sup>39</sup>And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. <sup>41</sup>And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup>and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. <sup>44</sup>There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

**6:30 "The apostles"** This is the only use of the term in Mark's Gospel. Usually he calls them "disciples." "Apostle" comes from a Greek word meaning "to send" (*apostellō*). Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them "apostles" (cf. Luke 6:13). This VERB is often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). In Jewish sources, the term was used of someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to "ambassador." They functioned on this mission trip as surrogates of Jesus. Their power and authority was delegated.

▣ **"they reported to Him"** This was part of Jesus' training. He taught them, showed them how, sent them out, and debriefed them. This is how they learned. See Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, which documents and implements Jesus' training of His disciples/apostles.

**6:31** As Jesus needed to get away from the press of the crowd (cf. 3:20), now so did His disciples. People were coming to be helped twenty-four hours a day. Their training was not complete. They needed some privacy and some time!

**6:32 "boat"** This word usually refers to a large fishing trawler, which would hold up to thirteen men (cf. Matt. 4:21-22; 8:23; Acts 21:2-3), but is also used of smaller boats (cf. Luke 5:2).

**6:33 "ran there together on foot from all the cities"** Can you imagine a huge crowd of the sick, lame, and curious people running along the shore? These people were desperate.

**6:34 "He felt compassion for them"** Jesus always had time for needy people (cf. Matt. 9:36).

▣ **"like sheep without a shepherd"** This metaphor has an OT basis (cf. Num. 27:17; Ezek. 34:5; Zech. 13). This may be a veiled allusion to Jesus' words in John 10.

▣ **"He began to teach"** Jesus' response to the needs of the crowd was His teaching. They needed spiritual wholeness, not just physical restoration. Jesus met both needs (cf. Matt. 14:14).

**6:35 "This place is desolate"** This is the "secluded" place of v. 31.

**6:37 "You give them *something to eat*"** Jesus was testing the disciples' faith. They accurately assessed the problem, now meet it!

▣ **"two hundred denarii"** A denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2) or soldier.

**6:38 "Five, and two fish"** They did not even have enough for themselves. Jesus was using this opportunity to show the disciples that what they have was enough and more if it was given to Him and if they trust Him!

**6:39 "sit down by groups"** This idiom (i.e., literally *sumpinō, sumpinō*, company, company) implied "get ready to eat!" Jesus seems to order the disciples to get the crowd organized for food distribution in a normal formation.

▣ **"on the green grass"** This is an eyewitness detail of Peter. This would also imply a time close to the Passover Feast in the spring.

**6:41 "looking up toward heaven"** The common physical position for Jewish prayer was standing with the arms and head raised and eyes open. Jesus was showing that the source of His authority was the heavenly Father.

▣ **“broke. . .He kept giving”** This is an AORIST TENSE and an IMPERFECT TENSE. The miracle of multiplication occurred in Jesus’ hands.

The parallel in John 6 makes the theological expectations of this crowd explicit. The Jews of Jesus’ day expected the Messiah to provide food for them as Moses did during the wilderness wanderings (cf. John 6:30-40). Jesus is giving them the very sign they requested, but they could not, or would not, see it.

**6:42** This statement is used in the Septuagint (i.e., the Greek translation of the OT) for the OT people of God being filled by the manna and quail (cf. Ps. 78:29; 105:40). This OT theme is developed in John 6:30-40, where Jesus fulfills the rabbinical expectation of providing food as Moses did. Jesus is the new Moses; His deliverance is the new exodus; and He brings the new age of abundance (cf. Ps. 132:15; Isa. 49:10).

**6:43 “twelve full baskets of the broken pieces and also of the fish”** This shows that Jesus did not perform miracles for their daily food. They had to conserve what they had for future meals.

Some commentators (William Barclay) deny the miraculous element and assert that the boy shared his lunch (cf. John 6:9) and that others in the crowd saw it and shared their lunches. If so, where did the twelve baskets left over come from? Our biases affect interpretation in the same way the biases of the people of Jesus’ day affected them!

**6:44 “five thousand men”** This was a long run (cf. v. 33) and a desolate place (cf. v. 32). There probably were not many women and children. We do not know the exact size of the crowd. It was huge!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:45-46**

<sup>45</sup>Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. <sup>46</sup>After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

**6:45 “Bethsaida”** This city’s name means “house of light.” It was on the western side of the lake.

▣ **“He himself was sending the crowd away”** The parallel in John 6 has so much more information about the reaction of this crowd. Mark’s points are the training of the disciples and Jesus’ compassion, while John’s account records how Jesus fulfilled the Jewish expectations about the Messiah feeding the Jews as Moses did (i.e. manna). They tried to make Him king. This shows their misunderstanding of Jesus’ mission (i.e., like His disciples, His family, and the religious leaders).

**6:46 “He left for the mountain to pray”** Jesus had a regular prayer time. This is especially obvious in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus knew this miracle would be misunderstood. As He did not want to become a healer, He did not want to become a feeder (cf. John 6:15). He came to reveal the Father, but the crowd could not or would not see. In a sense this was a fulfillment of the temptation of Satan in the wilderness of tempting people with bread (i.e., supernatural feedings, cf. Matt. 4:3-4).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:47-52**

<sup>47</sup>When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup>Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. <sup>49</sup>But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; <sup>50</sup>for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." <sup>51</sup>Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, <sup>52</sup>for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.

**6:48 “Seeing them”** It is uncertain whether this was (1) physical sight or (2) supernatural knowledge.

▣ **“straining at the oars”** This comes from Greek into English as “torture.” It was hard rowing against the wind.

▣ **“about the fourth watch of the night”** In Roman time this would be 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.

▣ **“He came to them, walking on the sea”** This was another nature miracle of Jesus for the purpose of strengthening the disciples’ faith. They witnessed His power and authority in many different ways. But they still did not understand; they were still afraid (cf. vv. 49-50) and amazed (cf. v. 51).

It is possible that this miracle was meant to fulfill Job 9:8; 38:16; Ps. 77:19; and Isa. 43:16. Jesus was acting out divine acts from the OT (cf. v. 52).

▣ **“He intended to pass by them”** This does not seem to fit the context unless it means to link up with Job 9:8 and 11! In the TEV footnote it has “join them.” This verb does have this connotation in Luke 12:32 and 17:7.

**6:49 “a ghost”** This is literally the term “phantom” as in Matt. 14:26. This is a strong term used of “mental and spiritual agitation and confusion” (cf. The Greek-English Lexicon of Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, p. 805).

**6:50 “Take courage”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE used so often by Jesus (cf. Matt. 9:2,22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; John 16:33; Acts 23:11).

▣ **“do not be afraid”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE also used so often by Jesus (cf. Matt. 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John 6:20; Rev. 1:17). This may link Jesus again to Moses (cf. Exod. 14:13; 20:20). Jesus was the new Moses or the new divine spokesman (cf. Gen. 15:1; Josh. 8:1).

**6:51** Noticeably absent is the account of Peter walking (and sinking) on the water (cf. Matt. 14:28-31). A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 319, has “Perhaps Peter was not fond of telling that story.”

**6:52 “for they had not gained any insight”** They were slow learners. Jesus was patient with them. This is so encouraging to me!

▣ **“their heart was hardened”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This is a difficult theological concept. Does this imply (by the PASSIVE VOICE) that God or the Spirit closed their minds? Probably it is idiomatic for their own biases and Jewish traditions blinding them to the truths so obvious in Jesus’ deeds and words (cf. 8:17-18). This “man” just did not fit into any of the categories they knew (cf. 4:13,40; 7:18). This is a recurrent theme in Mark. See Special Topic: Heart at 2:6.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:53-56**

<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, <sup>55</sup>and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. <sup>56</sup>Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

**6:55** This shows the need, the chaos, and the compassion and power of Jesus. This was also a lesson on the priority of people. Jesus always had time for them.

**6:56 “the fringe of His coat”** This refers to His “prayer shawl” (cf. Num. 15:38-40; Deut. 22:12). These people were desperate and superstitious and selfish.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do you handle the contradictions between the different Gospels?
2. Why was there such diversity of opinion over who Jesus was?
3. Was resurrection an unusual concept in Jesus’ day?
4. Why did God allow a hateful, evil woman to cause the death of a great man like John?
5. Why did Jesus draw such a large crowd?
6. Why did Jesus feed the 5,000?
7. How was Jesus’ teaching ministry related to His healings?

# MARK 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Tradition of the Elders	Defilement Comes from Within	Tradition of the Elders	The Teachings of the Ancestors	The Traditions of the Pharisees
7:1-13	7:1-23	7:1-8	7:1-2 7:3-4 7:5 7:6-7 7:8	7:1-13
		7:9-13	7:9-13	
			The Things that Make a Person Unclean	On Clean and Unclean
7:14-23		7:14-16 7:17-23	7:14-16 7:17-19 7:20-23	7:14-16 7:17-23
The Syrophenician Woman	A Gentile Shows Her Faith	The Syrophenician Woman	A Woman's Faith	The Daughter of the Syro-Phoenician Woman Healed
7:24-30	7:24-30	7:24-30	7:24-27 7:28 7:29 7:30	7:24-30
A Deaf and Dumb Man Healed	Jesus Heals a Deaf Mute	Healings	Jesus Heals a Deaf-Mute	Healing of the Deaf Man
7:31-37	7:31-37	7:31-37	7:31-34 7:35-37	7:31-37

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph



3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

A. Mark 7:1-23 is paralleled in Matt. 15:1-20

B. Mark 7:24-30 is paralleled in Matt. 15:21-28

C. Mark 7:31-8:9 is paralleled in Matt. 15:29-38

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-8

<sup>1</sup>The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup>(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; <sup>4</sup>and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) <sup>5</sup>The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" <sup>6</sup>And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,  
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.  
'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,  
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

<sup>8</sup>Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

**7:1 "Pharisees"** These were the most sincere religionists of their day. Culturally they were the best of the best. Jesus' conversations with them are recorded often (cf. 7:5-8; 11:27-33; 12:13-17). See fuller note at Mark 2:6.

**▣ "some of the scribes. . .had come from Jerusalem"** The religious leaders were always following Him to find fault (cf. 3:22; John 1:19). They apparently were an official fact-finding committee from the Sanhedrin (see Special Topic at Mark 12:13) of Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin was made up of 70 persons from

1. ruling priestly families (i.e., Sadducees, see Special Topic at Mark 12:18)
2. local religious leaders (i.e., Pharisees)
3. local wealthy land owners

**7:2 "impure hands, that is, unwashed"** This was not hygienic, but religious (cf. v. 4). Ceremonial purity was a very serious matter to them (cf. Luke 11:38; Matt. 15:2). It was spelled out in specific terms in the Talmud. The controversy was over the Oral Traditions, which interpreted OT texts.

**▣ "impure"** This is the Greek term *koinos*, which means "common" or "available to all." It is the name moderns give to the common Greek of Jesus' day. The Latin term "vulgate" has the same connotation (i.e., available to all). In this context it refers to that which is ceremonially unclean because of its contact with other unclean things.

### 7:3

NASB	"unless they carefully wash their hands"
NKJV	"unless they wash <i>their</i> hands in a special way"
NRSV	"unless they thoroughly wash their hands"
TEV	"unless they wash their hands in the proper way"
NJB	"without washing their arms as far as the elbow"

There is a Greek manuscript variation in this phrase. The most unusual reading is *pugmē*, which means "fist," found in the ancient uncial manuscripts A, B, and L, while *pukna*, meaning "frequently," is found in  $\aleph$ , W, and the Vulgate and Peshitta. Some

ancient texts just omit the parenthesis of vv. 3-4 (i.e., ninth century manuscript 037, known by the Greek capital letter delta, and some Coptic and Syriac translations and the Diatessaron). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 and an “A” rating (certain).

It is possible that this difficult Greek term reflects a Greek translation of an Aramaic phrase “unless they wash their hands in a (special) jug” (cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Broomiley, vol. 6, p. 916). The Pharisees took the OT requirement for priests on duty in the Temple and expanded them to all “true” Jews every day. They were adding to the Law of Moses.

Another option would be to take it as a rabbinical method of washing one’s hands and arms with a closed fist, but this is not substantiated by any written rabbinical tradition, unless it refers to the concept of catching the water poured over the elbows (with the hands down) with an open cupped hand so that it could be rubbed on the elbow again.

The term “wash” (*niptō*, cf. Matt. 15:2) was usually used to refer to washing part of the body and not to a complete bath (i.e., *louō*, cf. John 13:10).

▣ **“observing the traditions of the elders”** These traditions (cf. Gal. 1:14) were codified in the Talmud (i.e., Mishna). There are two editions of these rabbinical traditions. The more complete one is from Babylon Talmud and the unfinished one is from Palestine. The modern study of this literature has been hampered because no one is sure when these discussions were originally spoken or recorded. Two later rabbinical schools of interpretation developed, one conservative (i.e., *Shammai*) and one liberal (i.e., *Hillel*). All issues are debated based on these rabbinical discussions. The rabbis would quote their predecessors as authoritative.

**7:4 “unless they cleanse themselves”** The Jews expanded the laws relating to the priest entering the tabernacle to include all Jews (cf. Exod. 30:19). These regulations relate to ceremonial cleanliness. They had developed over a long period of time by inference and extrapolation from Levitical rules.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. Some Greek texts have:

1. AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVE of *baptizō* (i.e., MSS A, D, W as well as the Vulgate and Syriac translations)
2. PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE of *baptizō* (i.e., MSS F, L)
3. AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVE of *rantizō* “to sprinkle” (i.e., MSS N, B and the Coptic translation). Most modern translations go with option #1. Early scribes may have inserted #3 because *baptizō* had become a technical term for Christian baptism.

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives #1 a “B” rating (almost certain).



NASB	“and copper pots”
NKJV	“copper vessels and couches”
NRSV	“bronze kettles”
TEV	“copper bowls and beds”
NJB	“bronze dishes”

This term “pots” is a Latin term. Mark uses more Latin words than any other NT book. This may reflect its being written in Rome for Romans.

There is a Greek textual variant which adds *klinōn* (i.e., beds or couches) in manuscripts A, D, and W, while P<sup>45</sup>, N, B, and L omit it. Possibly scribes, knowing Leviticus 15, added the phrase, or later scribes, unfamiliar with the OT text, thought it out of place and deleted it. Speculation is interesting, but theologically insignificant.

**7:5 “asked Him”** This is an IMPERFECT tense which implies that they asked Him over and over again or else began to ask Him.

▣ **“not walk according to the tradition of the elders”** This was a serious religious matter for them. There is even a recorded incident in Jewish literature of a rabbi being excommunicated for failure to properly wash his hands. The Talmud, which recorded their rabbinical discussions on how to understand and implement OT texts, had become “the authority.”

**7:6 “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you”** Jesus believed that historically particular OT texts from Isaiah’s day related to this generation of Pharisees seven hundred years later. This shows the relevance of the Scripture to each new generation. God’s truths are affected by culture, but they also transcend time and culture! Jesus quotes Isa. 29:13.

▣ **“hypocrites”** This is a compound from two words “under” and “to judge.” It was a term used to describe actors playing a part behind a mask. Jesus accuses them of over zealousness on some issues, but total depreciation of others (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). It is not by accident that “hypocrites” and hand washing appear together in Ps. 26:4 and 6!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HYPOCRITES

This compound term is literally translated “to judge under.” It could have meant (1) a theatrical word for speaking from behind a mask or (2) its earlier usage was “to over interpret.” In this context it referred to religious play-acting.

Pharisees acted out religious rites and rituals in order to be praised by other humans, not in order to please God (although I am sure that was one of several motives):

1. gave alms, not only to help the poor, but to be praised by humans, Matt. 6:2
2. prayed in the synagogue and in public to be seen by humans, Matt. 6:5
3. when they fasted they looked disheveled so others would be impressed with their spirituality, Matt. 6:16
4. they tithed the kitchen supplies, but missed the weighty matters of the Law, Matt. 23:23
5. they cleaned the outside of the cup, but not the inside, Matt. 23:25 (cf. Mark 7:1-8)
6. they were self-righteous, Matt. 23:29-30
7. they prevented others from entering the Kingdom, Matt. 23:13-15
8. they tried to trap Jesus with tricky questions, not a search for true wisdom, Matt. 22:15-22
9. they have a special place in hell, Matt. 24:51
10. they were a whitewashed tomb full of uncleanness, Matt. 23:27 (cf. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 415)

▣ **“as it is written”** This is PERFECT TENSE meaning “it stands written.” This was a standard Jewish idiom for referring to inspired Scripture (cf. 9:12-13; 11:17; Matt. 4:4,7,10). The quote is from the Septuagint of Isa. 29:13, which describes human self-righteousness. Jesus gives an example of this in vv. 9-19 and in the parallel of Matt. 15:4-6.

▣ **“HEART”** For the Jews this was the center of mental activity, therefore, the basis of action. They used religious ritual as a means of gaining acceptance with God. Their traditions had become ultimate! This is always a danger with religious people. See Special Topic at 2:6.

▣ **“IS FAR AWAY”** This means “to hold at a distance.” Religious practices are often used to circumvent total dedication to God. Often religion is a barrier, not a bridge, to God.

**7:7** What a devastating condemnation of religious hypocrisy and formalism.

**7:8 “neglecting”** This means “to send away” (i.e., God’s commandment) and is in direct contrast to “hold,” which means “to grab,” “to grasp,” or “to cling to” the traditions.

▣ **“the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men”** The issue is revelation (OT) versus tradition (Talmud). This is an issue for every person in every culture (or denomination). Religious authority is a crucial issue!

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:9-13

<sup>9</sup>He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. <sup>10</sup>For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH'; <sup>11</sup>but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' <sup>12</sup>you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; <sup>13</sup>*thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

**7:9**

NASB	“You are experts at setting aside”
NKJV	“All too well you reject”
NRSV	“You have a fine way of rejecting”
TEV	“You have a clever way of rejecting”
NJB	“How ingeniously you get around”

This is cutting sarcasm, much like John 3:10.

**7:10 “Moses said”** The parallel of Matt. 15:4 has, “God said.” This shows God’s inspiration behind Moses’ words.

▣ **“HONOR”** This is a quote from the Ten Commandments recorded in Exod. 20:12 and repeated in Deut. 5:16. It is from a Hebrew commercial word “to give due weight to” (BDB 457), which means to recognize the worth of something.

**7:11 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which speaks of potential action. Jesus is referring to contemporary ways of circumventing God’s Law (cf. v. 12).

☐ **“YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER”** This shows the required respect for both parents.

☐ **“HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER”** This is a quote from Exodus 21:17. Dishonor brought severe judgment. The rabbis had set this verse aside by means of their traditions.

☐ **“Corban”** This was a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew (not Aramaic) “gift” given to God (i.e., or to the Temple, cf. NKJV). Jesus shows one example of how the Jewish religionists of His day circumvented the intent and stated laws of the OT by their Oral Traditions. They had devised many loopholes in their Oral Traditions (cf. Matt. 5:33-34; 23:16-22).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:14-16**

<sup>14</sup>After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup>there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. <sup>16</sup>[If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]"

**7:14 “He called the crowd to Him again”** Jesus publicly exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes and their traditions. The NKJV has the term *panta* (i.e., all) instead of *palin* (i.e., again).

☐ **“Listen. . .understand”** These are both AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. This phrase introduces an important and shocking example.

**7:15** This is a classical example of Jesus reinterpreting the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). He is nullifying the food code of Lev. 11. This was a powerful way of asserting His authority (i.e., He could change or negate the OT, but not them). This also should be a word of warning to those who make a religious matter out of food and drink (cf. Rom. 14:13-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33). Jesus’ words reveal the distinctive freedom of the New Covenant (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; I Cor. 8-10).

**7:16** This verse was included in many Greek uncial manuscripts (A, D, K, W, Θ), the Diatessaron, and the Greek texts used by Augustine (cf. NKJV and NJB). However, it was omitted in MSS Ξ, B, and L. It was possibly a scribal addition from Mark 4:9 or 23. The NASB (1995 Update) includes it in brackets to show that there is some doubt that it is original. The USB<sup>4</sup> rates its omission as “A” (certain).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17-23**

<sup>17</sup>When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. <sup>18</sup>And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, <sup>19</sup>because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*) <sup>20</sup>And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. <sup>21</sup>For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup>deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. <sup>23</sup>All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

**7:17 “His disciples questioned Him”** Matthew 15:15 says Peter. Jesus’ words were so shocking to these Jews of the first century! Jesus was cancelling Moses! Who was this unofficial rabbi claiming to be?

**7:18 “Are you so lacking in understanding also”** Jesus marveled at the disciples’ slowness to comprehend. His message was so different from what they had heard all their lives (i.e., Pharisaic theology). Tradition is hard to correct (cf. 4:13,40; 6:52; 8:21). Trusting Jesus as the promised Messiah meant a radical break with their cherished traditions and cultural expectations. The “Living Word” supercedes the “written word”! Believers worship Jesus, not the Bible.

Usually commentators say that Jesus rejected the oral tradition of the Jews, but always affirmed the OT laws. However, this rejection of the food laws and His rejection of Moses’ teaching on divorce in Matt. 5:31-32 (cf. Mark 10:2-12) clearly shows that Jesus saw Himself as the proper interpreter and even Lord over the OT (cf. Matt. 5:38-39). He is God’s ultimate revelation. None of us who cherish the Bible feel comfortable with this. We see the Bible as authoritative and relevant. However, how many other OT texts did Jesus see as not clearly revealing the Father’s intent? This not only shocked the scribes, to an extent it shocks me! It reminds me that the OT is not mandatory for NT believers (cf. Acts 15; Galatians 3). It surely is Scripture and it surely reveals

God, but I am not bound by its rituals or procedures (cf. Acts 15:6-11,19). I am bound by its world view and revelation of God and His purposes and promises (cf. Matt. 5:17-20)!

**7:19**

**NASB, NRSV** “(Thus He declared all foods clean)”

**NKJV** “thus purifying all foods”

**TEV** “(. . .Jesus declared that all foods are fit to be eaten)”

**NJB** “(Thus he pronounced all food clean)”

The parentheses reflect the translators’ view that it is an editorial comment (probably from Peter’s experience in Acts 10). It is such an important NT truth (cf. Rom. 14:13-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33). Humans are not right with God based on what they eat or do not eat! The new covenant is not based on OT regulations (i.e., Leviticus 11; Acts 15). God looks at the heart, not the stomach!

**7:20** The OT rabbis said that the mind was a fertile, prepared seed bed and that the eyes and ears are the windows of the soul. Whatever one allows to enter, takes root. Sin begins in the thought life and develops into actions. Human speech reveals the heart!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH**

### **I. OPENING THOUGHTS FROM PROVERBS**

- A. Language is part of the image of God in mankind (i.e., creation is spoken into existence and God talks to His human creation). It is a vital part of our personhood.
- B. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life. Therefore, it reveals who we really are (Pro. 18:2; 4:23 [20-27]). Speech is the acid test of the person (Pro. 23:7).
- C. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow humans. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (Pro. 17:10) and negative (Pro. 12:18) ways.
- D. There is tremendous power in human speech (Pro. 18:20-21)—power to bless and heal (Pro. 10:11,21) and power to curse and destroy (Pro. 11:9).
- E. We reap what we sow (Pro. 12:14).

### **II. PRINCIPLES FROM PROVERBS**

- A. The negative and destructive potential of human speech
  - 1. the words of evil men (1:11-19; 10:6; 11:9,11; 12:2-6)
  - 2. the words of the adulteress (5:2-5; 6:24-35; 7:5ff; 9:13-18; 22:14)
  - 3. the words of the liar (6:12-15,19; 10:18; 12:17-19,22; 14:5,25; 17:4; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 26:23-28)
  - 4. the words of the fool (10:10,14; 14:3; 15:14; 18:6-8)
  - 5. the words of false witnesses (6:19; 12:17; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18)
  - 6. the words of a gossip (6:14,19; 11:13; 16:27-28; 20:19; 25:23; 26:20)
  - 7. the words too quickly spoken (6:1-5; 12:18; 20:25; 29:20)
  - 8. the words of flattery (29:5)
  - 9. too many words (10:14,19,23; 11:13; 13:3,16; 14:23; 15:2; 17:27-28; 18:2; 21:23; 29:20)
  - 10. perverted words (17:20; 19:1)
- B. the positive, healing and edifying potential of human speech
  - 1. the words of the righteous (10:11,20-21,31-32; 12:14; 13:2; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20)
  - 2. the words of the discerning (10:13; 11:12)
  - 3. the words of knowledge (15:1,4,7,8; 20:15)
  - 4. the words of healing (15:4)
  - 5. the words of a gentle answer (15:1,4,18,23; 16:1; 25:15)
  - 6. the words of a pleasant answer (12:25; 15:26,30; 16:24)
  - 7. the words of the law (22:17-21)

### III. THE OT PATTERN CONTINUES IN THE NT

- A. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life; therefore, it reveals who we really are (Matt. 12:33-37; 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23).
- B. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow man. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (II Tim. 3:15-17) and negative (James 3:2-12) ways.
- C. There is tremendous power in human speech; power to bless (Eph. 4:29) and power to curse (James 3:9). We are responsible for what we say (Matt. 12:36-37; James 3:2-12).
- D. We will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45) as well as our deeds (Matt. 25:31-46). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

**7:21 “out of the heart of men”** Jesus lists a series of sinful attitudes and actions. These same types of sins were condemned by the Stoics. Paul also has several lists of sins like this one (cf. Rom. 1:29-31; I Cor. 5:11; 6:9; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9; II Tim. 3:2-5). See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues at I Peter 4:2.

▣ **“fornications”** The English word “pornography” shares the same root word as this Greek term. It meant any inappropriate sexual activity: premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, and even a refusal of Levirate responsibilities (a brother failing to sexually relate to the widow of a deceased brother in order to provide an heir).

In the OT there was a distinction between marital infidelity (adultery) and pre-marital promiscuity (fornication). However, this distinction is lost by the NT period.

▣ **“murder. . .deeds of coveting. . .deceit. . .pride”** These same terms describe the pagan world in Rom. 1:29-31. They show a heart out of control, a heart bent on “more for self at any cost.”

▣ **“adulteries”** This is the word *moicheia*, which refers to extra-marital sexual relations (cf. I Cor. 6:9-10). It came to be used metaphorically for idolatry. In the OT YHWH was the husband and Israel was the wife; therefore, going after other gods was a form of infidelity.

▣ **“sensuality”** This is used in Rom. 13:13 to show how believers should not live. In *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 771, Louw and Nida define this term as “behavior completely lacking in moral restraint, usually with the implication of sexual licentiousness.” Notice how many of these terms imply an uncontrolled sexuality, so characteristic of pagan culture of the first century.

**7:22** The order of this list of sins changes from translation to translation. In summary, life apart from God is out of bounds! Paul’s list in Gal. 5:19-21 describes the evil and the list in Gal. 5:22-23 describes the godly.



NASB, NRSV,

NJB “envy”

NKJV “an evil eye”

TEV “jealousy”

This is literally “an evil eye” (cf. NASB marginal note). In the Near East people were very conscious of someone putting a hex on them (i.e., active evil). In Hebrew it has the connotation of self-centered jealousy (cf. Deut. 15:9; Prov. 23:6).



NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “slander”

NKJV “blasphemy”

The term is literally “blasphemy,” which denoted saying something about someone that was not true. It can be used of slander or falsehoods about God or humans (cf. Acts 6:11; Rom. 2:24).

▣ **“pride”** This refers to a haughty, contemptuous, or proud person (cf. Luke 1:51; Rom. 1:30; II Tim. 3:2; James 4:6; I Pet. 5:5).

**7:23** The parallel in Matt. 15:20 summarizes the whole argument (cf. I Sam. 16:7).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:24-30

<sup>24</sup>Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. <sup>25</sup>But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. <sup>26</sup>Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophoenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. <sup>27</sup>And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>28</sup>But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." <sup>29</sup>And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." <sup>30</sup>And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

**7:24 "Tyre"** This is northwest of the Sea of Galilee, out of the boundaries of the OT Promised Land. It was predominately a Gentile area. The phrase "and Sidon" is missing in a few ancient Greek manuscripts, such as D, L, and W, but is present in Matt. 15:21 and Mark 7:31 and in manuscripts  $\aleph$ , A, and B, as well as the Vulgate and Peshitta.

▣ **"yet He could not escape notice"** This was the result of His miracles (cf. 3:8). Even in a predominately Gentile area He could find no rest and private time with His disciples.

**7:25 "little daughter had an unclean spirit"** How children become demon possessed is not stated here nor in the account in 9:17-29. In neither of these cases does it seem to be a familial spirit (i.e., demon passed from generation to generation within a family). See Special Topic: Exorcism at 1:25.

▣ **"fell at His feet"** This was a cultural sign of (1) asking a request of a superior or (2) humility. It is possible that she had heard of Jesus' miracles and, out of desperation, approached this Jewish rabbi in fear!

**7:26 "a Gentile, of the Syrophoenician race"** Remember, Jesus helped other Gentiles (cf. 5:1; 11:17; Matt. 8:5-13; John 4), but within the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land. If Jesus had begun a healing ministry in a Gentile land, He would have been rejected by the Jewish populace because of their prejudices.

There is an interesting parallel between Jesus' ministry to a Phoenician woman and Elijah's ministry to a Phoenician woman in I Kgs. 17. In both God's love, concern, and help are available to the hated Gentiles. This may have been another veiled evidence of His Messiahship.

In what language was this interchange between the woman and Jesus conducted? It would seem obvious that it had to have been Greek. Growing up in northern Palestine Jesus would have been tri-lingual. In Luke 4:16-20 Jesus reads from a Hebrew scroll of Isaiah. He would have been exposed to biblical Hebrew at synagogue school. He normally spoke Aramaic. He could speak Koine Greek (i.e., the private conversation with Pilate).

▣ **"she kept asking"** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE. She asked repeatedly!

▣ **"to cast the demon out"** This is AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. She still had some doubts about Jesus' ability or willingness to act, which is expressed by the SUBJUNCTIVE mood.

**7:27 "the children"** This familial term refers to Israel (cf. Matt. 15:24).

**7:27-28**

NASB, NRSV,

TEV "dogs"

NKJV, NJB "little dogs"

This is the only use of this term in the NT. Its harshness is diminished by the fact that it is DIMINUTIVE in form (i.e., *kunarion*), "puppies" (NJB has "house-dogs"). The Jews called the Gentiles "dogs" as a term of derision. This dialogue was intended to help the disciples overcome their prejudice against Gentiles (cf. Matt. 15:23). Jesus recognized and publicly affirmed that her faith was great (cf. Matt. 15:28).

**7:28 "Lord"** This is probably used in the cultural sense of "sir" or "mister," as in John 4:11. This is surprisingly the only example of the use of *kurios* spoken to Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

▣ **"the children's"** This is literally "little children" (*paidion*). There are several diminutive forms found in this context. In *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 326, A. T. Robertson says "the little children purposely dropped a few little crumbs for

the dog.” One wishes that Jesus’ voice inflection, facial expressions, and body language could have been recorded. I think the encounter was much more positive than mere words can record.

▣ **“children’s crumbs”** The wealthy used bread to wipe the hands after eating, like a napkin.

**7:29 “Because of this answer”** Jesus was impressed with this mother’s attitude of persistence and faith (cf. Matt. 15:28). Jesus healed/delivered people based on the faith of another several times (cf. 2:3-12; 9:14-29; Matt. 8:5-13).

▣ **“go; the demon has gone out of your daughter”** This woman believed Jesus that He could expel the demons even from a distance with no ritual or magic.

**7:29,30 “has gone”** In v. 29 it is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE and in v. 30 it is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which focus on the abiding result of a past act. The demon was gone and would stay away.

**7:30 “lying on the bed”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE which could be understood in two ways: (1) the demon had violently left (cf. 1:26; 9:26) and thrown the little girl on the bed or (2) her demoniac condition had caused her to be bedridden.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:31-37**

<sup>31</sup>Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. <sup>32</sup>They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*; <sup>34</sup>and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” <sup>35</sup>And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly. <sup>36</sup>And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. <sup>37</sup>They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

**7:31** This geographical description is unusual. Sidon was north of Tyre on the coast, while the Decapolis was south and east of the Sea of Galilee. The NKJV has “departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon,” but this translation is not supported by P<sup>45</sup>, A, W, and the Peshitta. Most textual critics support the more difficult text which takes Jesus north and east before going south.

▣ **“Sea of Galilee”** This same body of water is called (1) Chennereth in the OT; (2) Lake of Gennesaret in Luke 5:1; and (3) Sea of Tiberias during the first century Roman period in John 6:1; 21:1.

▣ **“region of Decapolis”** This was the area of the Gedarene Demoniac (cf. 5:1-20). It was also a Gentile area to the east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus’ ministry in these areas shows His love for the Gentiles.

**7:32 “was deaf and spoke with difficulty”** This term is used only here in the NT and in the Septuagint in Isa. 35:6. Verse 37 may relate to Isa. 35:5-6, which describes the future healing ministry of the Messiah.

▣ **“to lay His hand on him”** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE**

This gesture of personal involvement is used in several different ways in the Bible.

1. oath taking (i.e., hand under thigh [Gen. 24:2,9; 47:29])
2. passing on the family leadership (cf. Gen. 48:14,17,18)
3. identifying with the death of a sacrificial animal as a substitute
  - a. priests (cf. Exod. 29:10,15,19; Lev. 16:21; Num. 8:12)
  - b. laypersons (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2,8; 4:4,15,24; II Chr. 29:23)
4. setting persons aside to serve God in a special task or ministry (cf. Num. 8:10; 27:18,23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Tim. 4:14; 5:22; II Tim. 1:6)
5. participating in the judicial stoning of a sinner (cf. Lev. 24:14)
6. the hand on one’s mouth denotes silence or acquiescence (cf. Jdgs. 18:19; Job 21:5; 29:9; 40:4; Micah 7:16)
7. the hand on one’s own head means sorrow/grief (II Sam. 13:19)



8. receiving a blessing for health, happiness, and godliness (cf. Matt. 19:13,15; Mark 10:16)
9. relating to physical healing (cf. Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:17; 28:8)
10. receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:17-19; 9:17; 19:6)

There is a surprising lack of uniformity in the passages that have been historically used to support the ecclesiastical installation of leaders (i.e., ordination).

1. In Acts 6:6 it is the Apostles who lay hands on the seven for local ministry.
2. In Acts 13:3 it is the prophets and teachers who lay hands on Barnabas and Paul for missionary service.
3. In I Tim. 4:14 it is the local elders who were involved in Timothy's initial call and installation
4. In II Tim. 1:6 it is Paul who lays hands on Timothy.

This diversity and ambiguity illustrate the lack of organization in the first century church. The early church was much more dynamic and regularly used the spiritual gifts of believers (cf. I Corinthians 14). The NT is simply not written to advocate or delineate a governmental model or ordination procedure.

**7:33 “took him aside from the crowd”** This was both to stop the stories about His healing and to make the man feel more at ease (cf. 8:23).

▣ **“put His fingers into his ears”** Jesus was communicating to the man what He was trying to do in culturally acceptable physical gestures (i.e., a finger in the ear and saliva on the tongue).

▣ **“He touched his tongue *with the saliva*”** Saliva was commonly used medicinally in the first century Mediterranean world. It was meant to increase the man's faith.

**7:34 “and looking up to heaven”** This was the standard physical posture for Jewish prayer in Jesus' day (i.e., standing, eyes open, head raised, hands raised).

▣ **“with a deep sigh”** This refers to an inarticulate sound that expresses strong emotion (cf. Rom. 4; 8:22-23; II Cor. 5:12). Whether it is positive (cf. Mark 7:34; Rom. 8:26) or negative (cf. Acts 7:34; James 5:9) depends on the literary context. This may have revealed Jesus' grief over sin and sickness in a world devastated by rebellion. A compound form of this term appears in 8:12.

▣ **“Ephphatha”** This is an Aramaic AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE, meaning “be opened” (and they were, cf. v. 35). Peter remembered the very Aramaic words which Jesus spoke and Mark translated it into Greek for his Gentile (i.e., Roman) readers. See note at 5:41.

**7:36 “He gave them orders not to tell anyone”** The reason for this was that the gospel was not yet complete. Jesus did not want to be known as a miracle worker. The press of the crowds was already a problem. This “Messianic Secret” is characteristic of Mark. However, it is surprising because Jesus does so many acts and says such revealing things about Himself in Mark. Jesus clearly reveals Himself as Messiah and fulfills current Jewish expectations to those who had spiritual eyes to see!

**7:37** Healing the deaf was a clear Messianic sign (cf. Isa. 35:5-6).

▣ **““He has done all things well”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. What a summary statement made by the people of northern Palestine!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How should we relate to tradition? Define tradition.
2. Was Jesus setting aside the Old Testament? If so how do we treat the OT as inspired? (v. 19)
3. Explain the difference between Jesus' view of religion and that of the Pharisees.
4. Why did Jesus go into a predominately Gentile area? (v. 24)
5. How did a child become demon possessed? Does it happen today? (v. 25)
6. Why did Jesus tell them not to tell anyone about the man's healing? (v. 36)

# MARK 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Feeding of the Four Thousand 8:1-10	Feeding the Four Thousand 8:1-10	Four Thousand Fed 8:1-10	Jesus Feeds Four Thousand People 8:1-3 8:4 8:5 8:6-10	Second Miracle of the Loaves 8:1-10
Demand for a Sign 8:11-13	The Pharisees Seek a Sign 8:11-12 Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod 8:13-21	Sayings on Signs 8:11-13	The Pharisees Ask for a Miracle 8:11-12 8:13	The Pharisees Ask for a Sign from Heaven 8:11-13
The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod 8:14-21		Yeast of the Pharisees 8:14-21	The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod 8:14-15 8:16 8:17-19 8:20 8:21	The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod 8:14-21
The Healing of a Blind Man at Bethsaida 8:22-26	A Blind Paralytic Healed at Bethsaida 8:22-26	A Blind Man Healed 8:22-26	Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida 8:22-23 8:24 8:25-26	Cure of a Blind Man at Bethsaida 8:22-26
Peter's Declaration about Jesus 8:27-30	Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ 8:27-30	Peter's Confession 8:27-30	Peter's Declaration about Jesus 8:27 8:28 8:29a 8:29b 8:30	Peter's Confession of Faith 8:27-30
Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection 8:31-9:1	Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection 8:31-33 Take Up the Cross and Follow Him 8:34-9:1	On Discipleship 8:31-33 8:34-9:1	Jesus Speaks about His Suffering and Death 8:31-33 8:34-9:1	First Prophecy of the Passion 8:31-33 The Condition of Following Jesus 8:34-9:1

## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)

### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. One wonders whether Jesus fed crowds often or, for some reason unknown to modern Western interpreters, this event is repeated (i.e., 6:34-44 and 8:1-10).
- B. Mark 8:10-12 is paralleled in Matt. 15:39-16:4.
- C. Mark 8:13-26 is paralleled in Matt. 16:5-12.
- D. Mark 8:27-30 is paralleled in Matt. 16:13-20 and Luke 9:18-21.
- E. Mark 8:31-37 is paralleled in Matt. 16:21-26 and Luke 9:22-25.
- F. Mark 8:38-9:1 is paralleled in Matt. 16:27-28 and Luke 9:26-27.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-10

<sup>1</sup>In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, <sup>2</sup>“I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.” <sup>4</sup>And His disciples answered Him, “Where will anyone be able to *find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?” <sup>5</sup>And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” <sup>6</sup>And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. <sup>7</sup>They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. <sup>8</sup>And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. <sup>9</sup>About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away. <sup>10</sup>And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

**8:1 “In those days”** This account occurred in the mostly Gentile Decapolis area (cf. 7:31).

▣ **“there was again a large crowd”** This characterized Jesus’ ministry during this period.

**8:2 “I feel compassion for the people”** This term “compassion” comes from the Greek term for the lower organs of the body. (Liver, kidneys, bowels). In the OT the Jews assigned the seat of the emotions to the lower viscera.

Jesus loves people (cf. 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Matt. 9:36; 14:41; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Luke 7:13; 10:33). These people had been rejected by rabbis all their lives. They swarmed to Jesus’ care.

▣ **“they have remained with Me now three days”** This was an extended teaching time. The Jews counted days from evening twilight to evening twilight. Any part of a day was counted; therefore, this does not necessarily refer to three full, 24 hour days. They could not pull themselves away even to buy more food. They had now eaten all they had brought.

**8:3 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which speaks of potential action. Jesus is not asserting that they are all on the point of physical collapse, but some are sick and weak and might faint.

▣ **“they will faint on the way”** This fainting would be caused by lack of food. See Jdgs. 8:15 and Lam. 2:19 in the Septuagint. They had used all the food they brought and had been fasting.

▣ **“some of them have come from a great distance”** This shows how Jesus’ fame as a miracle worker had spread. Desperate people go anywhere, try anything for help!

**8:4 “Where will anyone be able to find enough bread”** Even if they had the money there was still no place to purchase food. Jesus was testing the disciples’ faith in His provision! They failed again (cf. 6:34-44).

**8:6 “sit down”** This refers to a reclining position, which implied get ready for food.

**8:6-8 “bread. . .fish”** This was the normal daily diet of the people of Palestine. This is so similar to 6:34-44.

▣ **“gave thanks”** This prayer of blessing over food acknowledges God’s daily care and provision (cf. Matt. 6:11). Jews always prayed before eating.

▣ **“broke. . .served”** This is an AORIST followed by an IMPERFECT TENSE. The miracle of multiplication occurred when Jesus broke the bread as in 6:41.

**8:8 “seven large baskets full of what was left over”** This is a different word for basket from 6:43. These baskets were very large (cf. Acts 9:25). These remaining pieces were collected for later use. However, from v. 14 we learn the disciples forgot and left them.

**8:9 “About four thousand”** Matthew 15:83 adds “men,” which means the crowd was larger. There were probably not a large number of women and children in this isolated area, but there were surely some.

**8:10 “immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“the district of Dalmanutha”** There are several variants in this phrase. The problem is that no place by this name was known in the Palestine of Jesus’ day. Therefore, scribes changed the place name to match Matthew’s “Magadan” (NKJV “Magdala”).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. <sup>12</sup>Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” <sup>13</sup>Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

**8:11 “Pharisees. . .began to argue with Him”** This was a common occurrence. They could not deny His authority, power, or popularity, so they tried to trick Him into answering questions which would alienate part of His audience. See Special Topic on Pharisees at 2:16.

▣ **“a sign from heaven”** In John’s Gospel the word “sign” had a special meaning, but here it refers to the Pharisees’ request for proof of His authority, possibly (1) a prediction (cf. Deut. 13:2-5; 18:18-22); (2) a heavenly sign (cf. Isa. 7:11; 38:7-8); or (3) an apocalyptic sign (militaristic victory over enemies).

▣ **“to test Him”** The word *peirazō* has the connotation of to try, test, or tempt “with a view of destruction.” This may be a veiled reference to the unbelief of the wilderness wanderings (cf. Exod 17:7; Num. 14:11-12,22; Deut. 33:8). See Special Topic on Greek Terms for “Testing” at 1:13.

**8:12 “Sighing deeply”** This is a compound and thereby intensified form of “groaned” (cf. 7:34). Jesus had showed them His authority already by deed and word, but their spiritual blindness remained.

▣ **“in His spirit”** This refers to Jesus’ personhood (cf. 2:8). It has the same connotation in 14:38 in respect to human beings. The term “spirit” is used in Mark for

1. the Holy Spirit (1:10,12)

2. unclean spirits (i.e., demons, 1:23,26,27; 3:11,30; 5:2,8,13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:17,20,25)
3. the human spirit (2:8; 8:12; 14:38)

▣ **“this generation”** This term also has OT implications connected to the wilderness wandering period (cf. Num. 32:13; Deut. 1:35; 32:5,20).

▣ **“Truly”** This is literally “amen.” See Special Topic “Amen” at 3:28.

▣ **“I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation”** This is a Hebrew idiom of strong negation (not a Greek conditional sentence) involving an understood, yet unexpressed, oath. When compared to Matt. 16:4 Jesus obviously meant no further signs. Jesus had given them many signs (i.e., OT prophecies fulfilled in His acts and words), but they refused to accept them or Him because He challenged their traditions, cultural position, and popularity.

**8:13** Jesus traveled extensively in northern Palestine because He wanted all to hear His message but also because of the press of the crowds.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:14-21

<sup>14</sup>And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. <sup>15</sup>And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." <sup>16</sup>They *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? <sup>18</sup>HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, <sup>19</sup>when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." <sup>20</sup>"When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." <sup>21</sup>And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

**8:14** This is obviously an eyewitness detail from Peter.

**8:15 “He was giving orders to them”** This is an IMPERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE from a strong term “to order with authority” (cf. 5:43; 7:36; 8:15; 9:9). This term is characteristic of Mark (i.e., often related to the “Messianic Secret”).

▣  
 NASB, NRSV “Watch out!”  
 NKJV “Take heed”  
 TEV “Take care”  
 NJB “Keep your eyes open”

This is literally “see” (i.e., *horaō*). It is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which implies continuing diligence to maintain proper vigilance.

▣  
 NASB, NKJV,  
 NRSV “Beware”  
 TEV “be on your guard against”  
 NJB “look out for”

This is also a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Both of these sharp commands are from different Greek words meaning “to see” (i.e., *horaō* and *blepō*), implying that believers must be constantly on guard (cf. 4:24; 12:38; 13:5,9,23,33) against self-righteous legalism and institutionalism.

▣ **“of Herod”** Early scribes tended to standardize the sayings of Jesus. In 3:6 and 12:13 Jesus says “Herodians”; therefore, the Greek manuscripts P<sup>45</sup>, G, and W, as well as some versions of the Vulgate, and Coptic translations, changed this GENITIVE form. The overwhelming Greek manuscript attestation is GENITIVE (cf. MSS X, A, B, C, D, and L). See Special Topic on the family of Herod at 1:14.

▣ **“leaven”** This was usually a symbol of corruption, as it is in this text (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9). This may be a word play in Aramaic because the terms “leaven” and “word” are very similar. The disciples’ problem was the same as the Pharisees, that is spiritual dullness or blindness. They must constantly be on guard against it. The Herods represented the opposite problem—the worldliness, the status quo at any cost!

**8:16 “*began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread*”** This is an IMPERFECT tense. The disciples had not learned the lesson yet. Jesus will supply all needs! Jesus is talking about corrupting influences and they think He’s talking about food!

The NKJV adds the word “saying” into this abbreviated sentence (as do many later minuscule Greek manuscripts) following Matt. 16:7. The NASB accomplished the same purpose by the addition of italicized words (i.e., “began” and “the fact”).

**8:17 “Jesus, aware of this”** It is not always obvious as to how Jesus knew things. Sometimes it is supernatural knowledge and other times knowing peoples’ behavior and characteristics.

▣ **“Why do you discuss *the fact that you have no bread*”** This is the first in a series of six or seven questions in which Jesus expresses His disappointment that His own disciples do not yet understand! This entire context of Mark reveals how hard it was for “friend and foe” to comprehend Jesus’ radically new message. His disciples, His family, His hometown, the crowds, and the religious leaders all did not have spiritual eyes or ears!

▣ **“Do you not yet see or understand”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. v. 21; 6:52). Jesus’ family, hometown, own disciples, townspeople, and religious leaders do not understand Him. Possibly this is a way to show the spiritual climate before the fullness of the Spirit comes at Pentecost (or the Messianic Secret is revealed in the crucified, risen Lord).

▣ **“Do you have a hardened heart”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE implying a settled spiritual condition brought about by an outside agent (cf. 4:13,40; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17,21,33; 9:10,32). This is exactly what will happen to Judas Iscariot. See Special Topic: Heart at 2:6.

**8:18** This is an OT quote from Ezekiel 12:2 (cf. Jer. 5:21), which theologically parallels Isa. 6:9-10 (cf. Mark 4:12). The OT prophets spoke the word of God, but were misunderstood because of the spiritual condition of their hearers. These OT quotes are in a grammatical form which expects a “yes” answer.

▣ **“And do you not remember”** Jesus is chiding them for their lack of spiritual understanding related to the miraculous feedings (cf. vv. 17-21). This phrase also has an OT orientation (cf. Deut. 4:9-10; 8:11,19). God’s people must retain and act on God’s truths.

**8:19 “baskets”** This is a different term from 8:8. This is the term used in 6:43 (i.e., smaller baskets). He is reminding them of the previous miraculous feeding. They had not made the connection (cf. 8:32-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-37).

**8:20** Verse 19 refers to the feeding in chapter 6, but verse 20 refers to the current feeding in chapter 8.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:22-26**

<sup>22</sup>And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. <sup>23</sup>Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” <sup>24</sup>And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around.” <sup>25</sup>Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began* to see everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

**8:22 “a blind man”** One of Isaiah’s prophecies about the Messiah was that He would bring sight to the blind (cf. Isa. 29:18-35:5; 42:7,16,18,19).

Physical blindness is an OT metaphor for spiritual blindness (cf. Isa. 56:10; 59:10). This same play on physical and spiritual blindness is graphically seen in John 9. This is obviously related to the disciples’ blindness in 8:15,18.

**8:23 “brought him out of the village”** This was for the purpose of putting the man at ease and keeping the healing a secret (cf. 7:33; 8:26).

▣ **“spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him”** These were both cultural ways of healing, one physical and one spiritual. It was meant to build the man’s faith. See Special Topic: Laying On of Hands at 7:32.

**8:24 “I see men, for I see *them* like trees”** Jesus was not limited in power, but was working with this man’s faith. This is the only partial healing or healing in stages that is recorded in the Gospels.

**8:25** This verse starts with Jesus laying hands on the man's eyes. Then the action switches to the man (cf. NJB). He must focus and look intently (cf. Matt. 7:5). When he cooperates, his sight immediately is restored.

**8:26** This refers to Mark's repeated references to Jesus emphatically telling people He healed not to broadcast their healing. The Textus Receptus (i.e., KJV or NKJV) even adds a phrase making this more specific. Jesus did not want to be known as a healer. He used healing to show the mercy of God, build the disciples' faith, and confirm His teaching ministry.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:27-30**

<sup>27</sup>Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" <sup>28</sup>They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup>And He *continued* by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup>And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

**8:27-30** This event is a watershed event in the Gospel of Mark. The miracle stories that affirm the power, authority, and deity of Jesus cease. From this point on the emphasis is the crucifixion. Mark's Gospel changes from a focus on who He is to His great redemptive act (i.e., what He did).

**8:27 "to the villages"** Matthew 16:13 has "into the district of." Jesus wanted to do two things (1) get away from the crowds and (2) preach in all the villages. In this case reason #1 is predominate.

▣ **"Caesarea Philippi"** This city is about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee in a predominately Gentile area. It was controlled by Herod Philip, not Herod Antipas.

▣ **"on the way He questioned"** As they were walking Jesus began (IMPERFECT TENSE) conversing with them.

▣ **"Who do people say that I am"** Matthew 16:13 has "Son of Man," which was Jesus' self-chosen title. This is the central religious question.

**8:28 "John the Baptist"** This was Herod Antipas' opinion, as well as some of the people's opinion (cf. Mark 6:14,16; Luke 9:19).

▣ **"Elijah"** This would imply that Jesus was the forerunner of the Messiah (cf. Mal. 4:5).

▣ **"one of the prophets"** Matthew 16:14 has "Jeremiah." All of these options involved a resurrection and were honorific titles, but not exclusively Messianic.

**8:29 "who do you say that I am"** This is PLURAL and was addressed to all the disciples. "You" is emphatic in Greek because the pronoun is fronted (i.e., put first in the sentence).

▣ **"You are the Christ"** Peter, the extrovert of the group, answers first. This is a transliteration of the Hebrew "Messiah" (BDB 603), which means "the Anointed One." Jesus was reluctant to publicly accept this title because of the Jews' false political, militaristic, and nationalistic interpretations. In this private setting He accepts, even seeks this title. The parallel of Matt. 16:16 has the full title, "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Mark (Peter's recorder) omits Jesus' praise of Peter (cf. Matt. 16:17,19).

**8:30 "He warned them to tell no one about Him"** This is another example of the Messianic Secret so common in Mark (cf. 1:33-34,43; 3:12; 4:11; 5:43; 7:24,36; 8:26,30). They knew the title but not the mission!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:31-33**

<sup>31</sup>And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. <sup>33</sup>But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

**8:31 "He began to teach them"** The IMPERFECT tense can mean (1) the beginning of an act or (2) the continuing of an act in past time. Here #1 is implied by the context, but there is another IMPERFECT in 8:32 which implies #2. This is Jesus' first prediction of His suffering and death, but there are others (cf. 9:12,31; 10:33-34).



▣ **“the Son of Man must”** This shows that Jesus clearly understood His mission and its cost (cf. Mark 10:45). This was exactly the type of predictive sign the Pharisees were seeking in v. 12 to confirm a true prophet (cf. Deut. 13:2-5; 18:18-22).

▣ **“suffer many things”** This was the aspect of the Messiah’s ministry that the Jews missed (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12; Zech. 9-14). In Jewish thought the Messiah was seen as a descendant of David, a militaristic champion of Israel. But He would also be a priest, as in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 3-4. This dual nature is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls community’s expectation of two Messiahs, one royal (from Judah) and one priestly (from Levi). This dynamic leadership role expectation seemed totally separate from a suffering, dying Messiah.

Jesus tried several times to inform the disciples about His prophesied suffering (cf. 8:31; 9:12,30-31; 10:33-34), but they could not understand (cf. 8:32-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-37).

▣ **“be rejected”** This means “disapproved” because Jesus did not meet the Jewish leadership’s preconceived Messianic understandings. He did not fit their expectations.

▣ **“by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes”** This was a way of referring to the Sanhedrin, a council of seventy leaders from Jerusalem analogous to a supreme court. See Special Topic at Mark 12:13.

▣ **“be killed. . .rise again”** This is the essence of the gospel message: a substitutionary sacrifice, and a glorious divine confirmation of its acceptance.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION**

### **A. Evidence for the resurrection**

1. Fifty (50) days later at Pentecost, the resurrection had become the key note of Peter’s sermon (cf. Acts 2). Thousands who lived in the area where it happened believed!
2. The lives of the disciples were changed radically from discouragement (they were not expecting resurrection) to boldness, even martyrdom.

### **B. Significance of the resurrection**

1. Shows Jesus was who He claimed to be (cf. Matt. 12:38-40 prediction of death and resurrection)
2. God put His approval on Jesus’ life, teaching, and substitutionary death! (cf. Rom. 4:25)
3. Shows us the promise to all Christians (i.e. resurrection bodies, cf. I Corinthians 15)

### **C. Claims from Jesus that He would rise from the dead**

1. Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,22, 23; 20:18-19; 26:32; 27:63
2. Mark 8:31; 9:1-10, 31; 14:28,58
3. Luke 9:22-27
4. John 2:19-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16

### **D. Further Study**

1. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
2. *Who Moved the Stone?* by Frank Morrison
3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, “Resurrection,” “Resurrection of Jesus Christ”
4. *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof, pp. 346, 720.

▣ **“after three days rise again”** This phrase could refer to Hos. 6:1-2. It is interpreted in a similar way in the Aramaic Targum on this verse. However, Jesus seems to be making an allusion to Jonah 1:17 (cf. Matt. 12:39; 16:4). This type of predictive sign was exactly what the Pharisees were asking for in v. 12 (cf. Matt. 16:4). This type of prediction was the basis of defining a true prophet according to Deut. 13:2-5; 18:18-22. Jesus gave them sign after sign, but they could not, would not see!

**8:32**

**NASB**

**NKJV**

**NRSV, NJB**

**TEV**

**“He was stating this matter plainly”**

**“He spoke this word openly”**

**“He said all this quite openly”**

**“He made this very clear to them”**

This is another IMPERFECT tense as in v. 31. There it meant “began,” but here it might refer to repeated action (i.e., Jesus told them about His suffering and death several times). He spoke to them plainly—no parables, no symbols, no metaphors (cf. John 10:24; 11:14; 16:25,29; 18:20).

▣ **“Peter took Him aside”** This was done in sincerity, but not with understanding. Peter is acting as Satan’s surrogate as to how to use His Messianic office to reach and save people (cf. 1:12-13; Matt. 4:1-11).

▣ **“and began to rebuke Him”** This is a strong Greek word (cf. LXX of Gen. 37:10; Luke 4:41; II Tim. 4:2). It is used of Jesus in 1:25; 3:12; 4:39; and 9:25. In this context Peter “scolded” or “censured” Jesus for His remarks. Surely his motive was to protect Jesus, not condemn Him. Peter did not understand the vicarious and prophetic nature of Jesus’ suffering.

Jesus rebukes Peter in 8:33 for his lack of spiritual insight and slowness to understand.

**8:33 “seeing His disciples”** Jesus spoke this word to Peter, but in a sense He was addressing all the disciples.

▣ **“Get behind Me, Satan”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus commands Peter to remove himself from Jesus’ sight. This has OT connotations of rejection (i.e., “cast behind the back,” cf. I Kgs. 14:9; Ezek. 23:35). Without realizing it, Peter was tempting Jesus in the very same way that Satan did in the wilderness (cf. 1:12-13; Matt. 4:1-11). Satan tried to get Jesus to win human allegiance in any way but Calvary (i.e., feed them, show them miracles, compromise His message). Peter did not realize that Jesus’ suffering and death was the plan of God (cf. 10:45; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; II Cor. 5:21). See Special Topic: Satan at 1:13.

Often the most painful and subtle temptations come from friends and family! The Kingdom of God, not personal preferences, personal privileges, or personal goals, is the highest priority (cf. 8:34-38).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:34-9:1**

<sup>34</sup>And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup>For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup>For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. <sup>9:1</sup>And Jesus was saying to them, 'Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"

**8:34 “summoned the crowd with His disciples”** Mark is the only Gospel that records the presence of the crowd at Caesarea Philippi. Usually this event is seen as a private teaching time, but obviously others were present. This crowd would have included many non-Jews and probably no Pharisees or religious leaders because it was out of the traditional promised land in a Gentile area. It is to this crowd that Jesus reveals the true cost of discipleship, the radical, total surrender needed to follow Him. He bids them follow, but clearly states the cost!

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose.

▣ **“anyone wishes to come after Me”** Notice the universal invitation to be Jesus’ disciples. But there is a cost (i.e., salvation is free, but discipleship is necessary and very expensive personally). It is interesting that Jesus’ very words to Peter in v. 33 (*hupage opisō mou*) are now used again (*opisō mou*), but in the sense of “come after me” (i.e., discipleship). There is an inappropriate followship (Peter as Satan’s surrogate) and an appropriate followship (i.e., selfless service). The very thing Peter rebukes Jesus for thinking is now clearly stated as the goal for all, “take up your cross”!

▣ **“he must deny himself”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE of a term which implies “to deny,” “to disown,” “to renounce,” or “to disregard” (cf. Matt. 16:24; 20:35,75; Mark 8:34; 14:30,32,72; Luke 9:23; 12:9; 23:34,61; John 13:38).

The fall (cf. Genesis 3) has made mankind’s independence and self-centeredness the goal of life, but now believers must return to selfless dependence on God. Salvation is the restoration of the image of God in humanity, damaged in the fall. This allows intimate fellowship with the Father, which is the goal of creation.

▣ **“take up his cross”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This phrase “take up your cross” referred to a condemned criminal having to carry his own crossbar to the place of crucifixion. This was a cultural metaphor for a painful, shameful death. In this context it refers to “death to our old sin nature.” The gospel is a radical call for once-and-for-all followship, discipleship (cf. Matt.

10:38; 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 17:33; John 12:25). As Jesus laid down His life for others, so we must follow His example (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; I John 3:16). This clearly demonstrates that the results of the fall have been removed.

▣ **“and follow Me”** This is PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the language of rabbinical discipleship. Christianity is a decisive choice followed by continual discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Eph. 2:8-10).

**8:35-37 “save his life. . .lose his life”** This is a play on the Greek word for “self,” *psuchē*. In this context there is a contrast between spiritual living (Kingdom focused) and selfish living (earthly, self-centeredness). The Williams translation of the NT has “higher life. . .lower life.” If we live for Christ we shall live eternally; if we live for self we are spiritually dead (cf. Gen. 3; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 5:18-19; 7:10-11; 8:1-8; Eph. 2:1,5; Col. 2:13; James 1:15) and one day will be eternally dead (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8). This truth is similar to the parable of “the rich fool” (cf. Luke 12:16-20).

**8:35 “gospel’s”** This is a compound of *eu* (good) and *angelos* (message). It originally meant proclaim good tidings, but it came to be used for the message about Jesus as the Messiah bringing salvation (and all its connected doctrines). It stands for the truths of Christianity and the proclaiming of those truths. Mark’s Gospel may have been the first to use it in this sense (cf. 1:1,14-15; 8:35; 10:29; 14:9).

**8:36 “to gain the whole world”** This also was one of Satan’s temptations to Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:8-9).

▣ **“and forfeit his soul”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE of a term used to describe the loss of something which one previously possessed (cf. Matt. 16:26; Acts 27:10).

**8:37** This is a powerful question. Where is the priority, present life or eternal life? Selfish living robs one of the joy of life and the gift of life! This life is both a gift and a stewardship.

**8:38 “whoever is ashamed of Me and My words”** This refers to the time when each person is confronted with the gospel. This same truth is expressed in a different way in Matt. 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9. What people decide today about the gospel determines their future. Jesus is the gospel!

This phrase is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which introduces a contingency (cf. TEV and NJB).

▣ **“in this adulterous and sinful generation”** The Jews in the interbiblical period developed a theology of two ages. The current age was dominated by sin, self, and unrighteousness. See Special Topic: The Two Jewish Ages at Mark 13:8. However, God was going to send the Messiah and establish a new age of righteousness. Jesus is stating that He Himself was inaugurating this new day and that this new righteousness depends (i.e., is contingent upon, cf. John 1:12; 3:16) on one’s personal faith and trust in Him, not one’s human performance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 5:20).

▣ **“the Son of Man”** This is Jesus’ self-designation; it had no nationalistic, militaristic, or exclusivistic implications in first century Judaism. The term comes from its typical usage in Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4, where it meant “human being” and Dan. 7:13, where it implies Messiah and Deity (i.e., riding on the clouds of heaven, approaching God and receiving the eternal kingdom). The term combines the twin aspects of Jesus’ person, fully God and fully man (cf. I John 4:1-3).

▣ **“when He comes”** The OT clearly reveals one coming of the Messiah. However, Jesus’ earthly life showed that Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; and Zechariah 9-14 also refer to a suffering of the Messiah. The second glorious coming of the Messiah as Lord and Judge of the cosmos will be exactly the way the Jews were expecting Him to come the first time. Their closed-minded, theological dogmatism caused them to reject Jesus.

The Second Coming is a major and oft repeated NT truth (cf. Matt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:3,27,30,37; 26:64; Mark 8:38-39; 13:26; Luke 21:27; John 21:22; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 1:7; 15:23; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16; II Thess. 1:7,10; 2:1,8; James 5:7-8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7).

▣ **“in the glory of His Father with the holy angels”** This is an OT prediction from Dan. 7:10 (cf. Matt. 16:27; Mark 13:20; Luke 9:26; II Thess. 1:7). This refers to the Second Coming. This was another way of asserting the deity of Jesus. Several times in Matthew the angels are the eschatological gatherers and dividers of humanity (cf. 13:39-41,49; 24:31).

▣ **“glory”** In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kabod*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) meaning “to be heavy.” That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 15:16; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; John 14:8-9; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22)

It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people in the cloud of glory during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10).

**9:1** There have been many theories to explain Jesus’ statement. It may have referred to

1. Jesus’ ascension
2. the Kingdom already present in Jesus
3. the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost
4. the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70
5. the expectation of Jesus’ early return
6. the rapid spread of Christianity
7. the transfiguration.

These theories focus on different phrases in the text: (1) “some of the people standing here”; (2) “the Kingdom of God”; or (3) “come in its power.” The best guess is #7 because of the immediate context of Mark. 9:2-13 and II Pet. 1:16-18. Also, no other theory can explain all three aspects of the text. But realize if it does, then it only referred to Peter, James, and John.

▣ **“Truly”** This is literally “amen.” See Special Topic at 3:28.

▣ **“will not taste death”** This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE used as a metaphorical phrase (i.e., experience cessation of life).

▣ **“the kingdom of God”** See note at a 1:15.

▣ **“it has come with power”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which implies the full and complete coming of the kingdom. This is in contrast to the fact that the kingdom, in some real sense, was inaugurated with Jesus’ coming (i.e., incarnation), but a future event is to be expected (i.e., Second Coming).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Did Jesus feed two large crowds or is there one feeding from two perspectives?
2. What kind of “sign” did the Pharisees want?
3. Why did Jesus chide the disciples?
4. Why did Jesus only partially cure the blind man the first time?
5. Why is Matthew’s account so much fuller than Mark’s account of Peter’s confession?
6. What exactly did Peter’s confession imply about Jesus?
7. Why were the disciples so shocked at Jesus’ teaching about His death at Jerusalem?
8. Explain in your own words what verses 34-38 mean.

# MARK 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Transfiguration of Jesus	Jesus Transfigured on the Mount	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration
9:2-8	9:2-13	9:2-8	9:2-6	9:2-8
		Prophecies about Elijah	9:7-8	The Question about Elijah
9:9-13		9:9-13	9:9	9:9-13
			9:10-11	
			9:12-13	
The Healing of a Boy with an Unclean Spirit	A Boy is Healed	Epileptic Child Healed	Jesus Heals a Boy with an Evil Spirit	The Epileptic Demoniac
9:14-29	9:14-29	9:14-29	9:14-16	9:14-29
			9:17-18	
			9:19-20a	
			9:20b-21a	
			9:21b-22	
			9:23	
			9:24	
			9:25	
			9:26-27	
			9:28	
			9:29	
Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection	Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection	The Passion Foretold	Jesus Speaks Again About His Death	Second Prophecy of the Passion
9:30-32	9:30-32	9:30-32	9:30-31	9:30-32
			9:32	
Who is Greatest?	Who is Greatest?	True Greatness	Who is Greatest?	Who is Greatest?
9:33-37	9:33-37	9:33-37	9:33	9:33-37
			9:34-37	
He Who Is Not Against Us is For Us	Jesus Forbids Sectarianism	The Unknown Exorcist	Whoever Is Not Against Us is For Us	On Using the Name of Jesus
9:38-41	9:38-41	9:38-41	9:38	9:38-40
			9:39-41	Generosity Shown to Christ's Disciples
				9:41
Temptations to Sin	Jesus Warns of Offenses	Warnings of Hell	Temptations to Sin	On Leading Others Astray
9:42-50	9:42-48	9:42-48	9:42-48	9:42-50

Tasteless Salt is Worthless	Salty Disciples	
9:49-50	9:49-50	9:49
		9:50a
		9:50b

## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. Mark 9:2-8 is paralleled in Matt. 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36.
- B. Mark 9:9-13 is paralleled in Matt. 17:9-13 and Luke 9:36.
- C. Mark 9:14-29 is paralleled in Matt. 17:14-20 and Luke 9:37-43.
- D. Mark 9:30-32 is paralleled in Matt. 17:22-23 and Luke 9:43-45.
- E. Mark 9:33-37 is paralleled in Matt. 18:1-5 and Luke 9:46-48.
- F. Mark 9:38-50 is paralleled in Matt. 18:6-14 and Luke 9:49-50.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:2-8**

<sup>2</sup>Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; <sup>3</sup>and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. <sup>4</sup>Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. <sup>7</sup>Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" <sup>8</sup>All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

**9:2 “six days”** Luke 9:28 has “eight days.” Such a specific time designation is very unusual in Mark’s Gospel.

▣ **“Peter and James and John”** This is the inner circle of disciples who were always present at major events (cf. 5:37). This event was as much for them as for Jesus.

▣ **“on a high mountain”** Tradition (i.e., the non-canonical Gospel of Hebrews) says it was Mt. Tabor, but probably it was one of the foothills of Mt. Hermon.

One wonders if this experience was a typological way of mirroring Moses’ Mt. Sinai experience.

1. a high mountain
2. the cloud
3. faces glorified (Exod. 34:29)
4. a six-day period (cf. Exod. 24:16)

This Exodus motif (i.e., Jesus as the new Moses, giving the new covenant, bringing His people out of the slavery of sin) is a recurrent allusion in Mark. In Luke’s Gospel, it says Jesus, Moses, and Elijah discussed Jesus’ exodus.

▣ **“by themselves”** Luke 9:28 states the purpose as “to pray.” Jesus wanted to get away from the crowds to teach the disciples privately. In this instance it was this inner circle of leadership.

▣ **“He was transfigured before them”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE of a compound term *meta* (i.e., after) and *morphoō* (i.e., form), with the resulting meaning of “to change one’s appearance.” We get the English term “metamorphosis” from this Greek term. Jesus’ radiant pre-existent glory shows through His fleshly body. The radiance of His true divine self was visible to these disciples (cf. II Pet. 1:16-18). The term *morphē* (cf. Phil. 2:6-7) denotes the unchanging essence of something or someone (the opposite of *schēma*, cf. Phil. 2:8, the changing outward form).

This same transformation is possible for His followers (cf. Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 3:18). In a sense this refers to the restoration of the divine image in mankind, damaged in the Fall of Genesis 3. Jesus enables us to become truly human, truly Christlike.

### 9:3

NASB	<b>“His garments became radiant and exceedingly white”</b>
NKJV	<b>“His clothes became shining, exceedingly white”</b>
NRSV	<b>“his clothes became dazzling white”</b>
TEV	<b>“his clothes became shining white”</b>
NJB	<b>“his clothes became brilliantly white”</b>

Matthew 17:2 adds that “His face shone like the Sun.” This is surely an aspect of Jesus’ glory, which often has a brightness component (cf. fuller notes at 8:38).

### ▣

NASB, NKJV	<b>“no launderer on earth can whiten them”</b>
NRSV	<b>“such as no one on earth could bleach them”</b>
TEV	<b>“whiter than anyone in the world could wash them”</b>
NJB	<b>“whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them”</b>

This refers to a worker who cleaned cloth.

It is in verses such as this that history books are so helpful. Let me mention several that have helped me understand Ancient Near Eastern culture.

1. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, two vols.
2. Fred H. Wright, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*
3. James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*
4. Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, two vols.
5. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*
6. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*
7. Edwin M. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures*

**9:4 “Elijah. . . Moses. . . Jesus”** This shows God’s continuing revelation. Notice they apparently already had their resurrection bodies, which is surprising in light of I Thess. 4:13-18. These were two major figures in the Old Testament who had an eschatological prophetic aspect (i.e., Elijah before the Messiah and Moses, a Prophet like Jesus).

▣ **“appeared”** This term is used of angelic appearances in Luke 1:11 and 22:43, and of Jesus in Luke 24:34.

▣ **“they were talking with Jesus”** This is a PERIPHRASTIC IMPERFECT, which implies a long conversation. Luke 9:31 says they were discussing Jesus’ departure (i.e., exodus) from Jerusalem. There is an amazing corollary between this passage and Exod. 24:12-18.

1. the time element of “six days” (v. 2)
2. the place, “on a high mountain” (v. 2)
3. the presence of a cloud and God’s speaking from it (v. 7)
4. the mention of glory on Moses’ face and here Jesus’ face (Luke 9:29; Exod. 34:29-30)

**9:5 “Peter said to Jesus”** Luke 9:32 says the three disciples were asleep after a long day and a hard climb and Peter woke up just in time to see Elijah and Moses departing.

▣ **“Rabbi”** The Matthew parallel has “Lord” and the Luke parallel has “Master.”

▣ **“it is good for us to be here”** What an awesome spiritual and physical experience this must have been; what a confirmation of the person of Jesus as the promised OT Messiah.

▣ **“tabernacles”** This would have been a structure similar to the temporary thatch huts used during the Festival of Booths. The implication of Peter’s statement was that if the glorified OT visitors would stay a while, they could stay a while longer, too!

**9:6** Whenever Peter did not know what to do, he talked!

**9:7 “cloud”** This was the symbol of YHWH’s presence in the exodus (cf. Exod. 13-14). The rabbis called this “the *Shekinah* cloud of Glory,” meaning YHWH dwelt visibly and permanently with Israel.

▣ **“overshadowing them”** This term reflects the OT sense of the special cloud of YHWH’s presence providing shade (i.e., protection) and guidance to the people of God during the Wilderness Wandering period (i.e., 38 years). This cloud reappears three times related to Jesus.

1. at His conception Mary is overshadowed by the Spirit (cf. Luke 1:35)
2. at His baptism Jesus is addressed by a voice from heaven (the cloud itself is not specifically mentioned, cf. Matt. 3:17)
3. at the Transfiguration a voice is heard (cf. Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34)

This term is used two other times in the NT, once in relation to Peter’s shadow falling on people and resulting in their healing (cf. Acts 5:15) and a compound form of the term in Heb. 9:5, referring to the Cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the covenant.

▣ **“a voice”** This is either (1) related to YHWH speaking out of the cloud in the wilderness or (2) a *Bath Kol* (i.e., a voice from heaven), which was God’s way of revealing YHWH’s will during the intertestamental period when there was no prophet (cf. Mark 1:11).

▣ **“My beloved Son”** The term “son” in this OT phrase was used for (1) Israel as a whole; (2) the Israeli King as YHWH’s representative; and (3) the promised, coming Messiah (cf. Ps. 2:7). This is the second time that the Father has addressed the Son in this special way, by this special title (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). See fuller note at 1:11 and Special Topic at 3:11.

▣ **“listen to Him”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which reflects the prophecy of Deut. 18:15. The Father’s ultimate revelation is to be acknowledged and obeyed (cf. Luke 6:46).

**9:8** This verse implies either that (1) this experience was a vision or (2) a rapid change back to the visible realm occurred.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:9-13**

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. <sup>10</sup>They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. <sup>11</sup>They asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” <sup>12</sup>And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup>But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

**9:9 “He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead”** This was the only occurrence where a time factor is linked to Jesus’ repeated warnings about their silence (cf. 5:43; 7:36; 8:30). This



restriction is related to the fact that the gospel was not yet complete. At a future time, their memory of this event would be clearly understood in light of all the other gospel events (cf. II Pet. 1:16-18).

**9:10 “discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant”** The disciples did not understand the distinction between “the Second Coming” (8:38) and “the Resurrection” (9:9). The Jews of Jesus’ day expected only one coming of the Messiah into history and this coming was related to the military victory and supremacy of national Israel on a global scale. See Special Topic: The Resurrection at 8:31.

**9:11 “the scribes”** These were the culturally respected OT interpreters who explained the OT and how it applied to their day. In this time most of the scribes were Pharisees. See Special Topic at 2:6.

**9:12-13 “Elijah does first come. . .Elijah has indeed come”** Jesus asserts that John the Baptist had fulfilled the prophetic role of Elijah found in Mal. 3:1 and 4:5. There has been much discussion about the answer which Jesus gave. He stated specifically that Elijah had already come in the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:10, 14; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17). However, when the Pharisees asked John the Baptist, himself, in the Gospel of John (1:20-25) if he was Elijah, he flatly denied it. This seeming contradiction can be handled by the fact that John denied that he was a resuscitated Elijah, but Jesus affirmed that John symbolically fulfilled the preparation ministry of Elijah. They both dressed and acted in similar ways, so the identification would be obvious in the minds of the Jews who knew about Elijah and who heard and saw John the Baptist (Luke 1:17).

**9:12 “will suffer many things and be treated with contempt”** This was so shocking to the Jewish people of Jesus’ day who expected a powerful deliverer like the OT judges and were not expecting a suffering savior. They had missed several OT clues (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12; Zechariah 9-14). It took the twelve disciples years to comprehend; even they did not fully understand until the special ministry of the Spirit at Pentecost (cf. John 16:13-14) revealed it to them.

Notice that Jesus is trying to involve the twelve disciples in theological reasoning. He is forcing them to see the relationship between two different prophecies. They were not officially “scribes,” but soon they must function like them.

Jesus surprised them with an unexpected fulfillment which was not literal, but typological (i.e., John the Baptist functioned as the fulfillment of Elijah’s coming and preparing the way for the Messiah).

Jesus took every private moment to teach His disciples. Even on the way down the mountain He brings up a related issue (i.e., Malachi’s prophecy about Elijah). This taking advantage of every opportunity for religious training is reflected in Deut. 6:7 and 11:19.

**9:13 “as it is written of him”** Elijah had persecution from Jezebel (cf. I Kgs. 19:2,10,14) as John did from Herodias.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:14-29**

<sup>14</sup>When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and *began* running up to greet Him. <sup>16</sup>And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" <sup>17</sup>And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; <sup>18</sup>and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*." <sup>19</sup>And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" <sup>20</sup>They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming *at the mouth*. <sup>21</sup>And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. <sup>22</sup>It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" <sup>23</sup>And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." <sup>24</sup>Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." <sup>25</sup>When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." <sup>26</sup>After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and *the boy* became so much like a corpse that most of *them* said, "He is dead!" <sup>27</sup>But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. <sup>28</sup>When He came into *the house*, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" <sup>29</sup>And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

**9:14 “When they came back to the disciples”** Jesus had left the rest of the disciples at the bottom of the mountain. Luke 9:37 says they returned the next day.

▣ **“a large crowd...scribes arguing”** Both of these things characterized Jesus’ ministry and now the disciples were experiencing a foreshadowing of Jesus’ existential situation and also their coming ministry. These were recurrent problems, but also opportunities.

**9:15 “immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“they were amazed”** Some see this amazement as referring to Jesus’ face still glowing related to Exod. 34:29-30, but the context seems to imply that Jesus’ appearance came at an opportune moment for ministry and teaching.

▣

NASB **“began running up to greet Him”**

NKJV **“running to Him, greeted Him”**

NRSV **“they ran forward to greet Him”**

TEV **“ran to him and greeted him”**

NJB **“ran to greet him”**

This is an IMPERFECT tense, which can mean (1) the beginning of an action (cf. NASB) or (2) a repeated action in past time. This crowd was excited to see Jesus and one after another ran up and greeted Him.

**9:16 “What are you discussing with them”** Jesus addresses this question to the crowd. The scribes were not concerned with the young boy, but with the theological aspect of the disciples’ inability to effect a cure.

**9:17 “possessed with a spirit”** The Gospels make a definite distinction between demon possession and physical illness. In this particular case there seems to be a blurring of this distinction. The symptoms described by the father and the implication of several Greek words in the text imply epilepsy, especially a grand mal seizures. This physical element was aggravated or instigated by demonic possession. See Special Topic: The Demoniac at 1:23.

**9:18 “stiffens out”** This is a description of a grand mal seizure.

▣ **“I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*”** The disciples were surprised also. Jesus gave them the power over the demonic in 6:7,13, but in this case their attempts failed!

**9:19** Jesus uses two rhetorical questions in v. 19 to express His disappointment at the lack of faith of the disciples, the crowd, and the scribes.

**9:20 “when he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion”** This was demonic possession manifesting itself in epilepsy.

**9:21** There are several accounts in the Gospels of demon possession of children. How and why this occurred is never stated.

**9:22** The destructive nature of the demonic is clearly seen in the father’s description of this boy’s life.

▣ **“destroy”** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 3:6.

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE that is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. This was the father’s affirmation of faith in Jesus’ ability to heal.

▣ **“take pity on us and help us”** This father had faith in Jesus even when the disciples failed to deliver his son.

In *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1. p. 113, M. R. Vincent makes the point that this father identified completely with his son’s problems, as did the Syro-Phoenician woman to her daughter (cf. Matt. 15:22).

**9:23 “If You can”** This is a repeat of the man’s statement of v. 22. It is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. This man affirmed Jesus’ ability; now Jesus tests his faith.

▣ **“All things are possible to him who believes”** This is not a blank check for humanity, even believing humanity, to manipulate God, but a promise that God will do His will through believing faith (see Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*). There are two conditions: (1) God’s will and (2) believing faith! See Special Topic: Effective Prayer at 11:23.

**9:24 “I do believe, help my unbelief”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Remember it is the object of faith, not the quantity, that is crucial (cf. Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6). Notice that Jesus worked with this man’s doubts, as He will with ours.

Jesus deals with the father’s faith, not the boy’s, because he has been possessed since he was a child. One wonders if one of the reasons the disciples could not exorcize the boy was the father’s lack of faith in them. Jesus often focused on parent’s or friend’s faith in effecting cures and deliverances. This father’s words admit his need and beseeches Jesus’ help to further his faith. This is a prayer we could all pray!

The Textus Receptus adds *kurie* (i.e., the VOCATIVE of Lord), which may be a scribal addition to show the father’s faith by addressing Jesus as Lord, but this addition is not in any modern English translation besides KJV and NKJV.

**9:25 “a crowd was rapidly gathering”** It is uncertain how this relates to the exorcism. It is opposite of the Messianic Secret found so often in Mark. Jesus demonstrates His power and authority in a situation the disciples could not handle. The press and curiosity of the crowd was always a problem, but also an opportunity. This could be the same crowd as vv. 14-15 or a large number of new arrivals.

▣ **“You deaf and mute spirit”** Apparently this was just another aspect of this boy’s physical problems (cf. v. 17) related to the demonic possession.

▣ **“come out of him and do not enter him again”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE and an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE that meant “get out and do not ever start to come back.”

**9:26** The physical manifestations accompanying the departure of the demonic appear to have been common in NT exorcisms.

▣ **“the boy became so much like a corpse”** This is another symptom of a grand mal seizure.

**9:27 “Jesus took him by the hand and raised him”** This procedure showed Jesus’ concern and compassion (cf. 1:31; 5:41). He was not afraid to touch the sick and possessed!

**9:28 “Why could we not drive it out”** They were surprised! Earlier they had been able to cast out demons; why not now? Matthew 17:20 says it was because of the smallness of their faith.

**9:29 “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer”** Many other Greek manuscripts add “and fasting.” However, this is not found in  $\aleph$  or B, nor the Greek manuscript used by Clement. The addition of the phrase is very ancient and wide-spread, probably because of the early church’s propensity from Judaism in this area. It is included in MSS P<sup>45</sup>,  $\aleph^2$ , A, C, D, K, L, W, X, and the Diatessaron. See Special Topic on Fasting at 2:18-20. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter reading an “A” rating (certain).

Theologically this account implies that there are different kinds of demons which require different techniques. See Special Topic at 1:25.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:30-32**

<sup>30</sup>From there they went out and *began* to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *about it*. <sup>31</sup>For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” <sup>32</sup>But they did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

**9:30 “began to go through Galilee”** This is still the setting of leaving the Mountain of Transfiguration and moving south through Galilee. Jesus wanted to personally speak to as many people as possible.

▣ **“He did not want anyone to know *about it*”** This is another aspect of Jesus’ desire not to be known as a healer or miracle worker because the press of the crowds seeking physical help made it impossible for Him to teach and preach.

**9:31 “Son of Man”** See note at 8:38c.

▣ **“is to be delivered”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The term means “to hand over to the authorities.” This was the third time that Jesus had clearly revealed to the disciples what would happen in Jerusalem (cf. 8:31; 9:12).

▣ **“He will rise”** See Special Topic at 8:31.

▣ **“three days”** In Jewish recording of time, it was probably about 30-38 hours (i.e., a brief time on Friday before twilight, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday before dawn). This time period is linked to Jonah’s experience several times (cf. Matt. 12:39-40; 16:3; Luke 11:29-32).

**9:32 “they did not understand”** This is a recurrent theme in the Synoptic Gospels. Luke’s Gospel reveals the situation clearly.

1. the disciples did not understand (2:50; 9:45; 18:34)
2. they should have because Jesus’ words were interpreted for them (8:10)
3. Jesus opened the minds of the disciples (24:45)

They were as blind as the crowds until Jesus’ words and the Spirit’s inspiration opened their closed minds and hearts to the truth of the new covenant. The fallen human mind cannot understand except by the help of the Spirit and even then it is a slow growing process from salvation to sanctification.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:33-37**

<sup>33</sup>They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup>But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them was* the greatest. <sup>35</sup>Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup>Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, <sup>37</sup>"Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

**9:33 “Capernaum”** This town, the hometown of Peter and Andrew, became Jesus’ headquarters after the unbelief of Nazareth.

▣ **“when He was in the house”** This was probably Peter’s home (cf. 1:29) or a rented house used by Jesus.

▣ **“What were you discussing on the way”** They were arguing, not just discussing. He had told them of His death (three times) and they wanted to know which one of them would take His place as leader (cf. Matt. 18:1-18; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24).

**9:34 “greatest”** This shows the jealousy of the other groups of disciples against the inner circle of Peter, James, and John. It may also reflect their Jewish concept of a nationalistic earthly kingdom.

**9:35 “sitting down”** This would have denoted an official teaching session (cf. 4:1; 9:35; Matt. 5:1; Luke 4:20).

▣ **“If anyone wants to be first”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective. Jesus did not condemn ambition, but defined it in terms of the new ethic of the Kingdom of God. Greatness is linked to service (cf. 10:31,45; Matt. 20:26; 19:30; John 13:5), not control or power! God’s Kingdom is so different from human societies.

These words are a good example of how Jesus repeated His teachings in different settings and at different times (cf. 10:43-44; Matt. 23:11; Luke 22:24-25).

▣ **“servant”** Jesus spoke Aramaic. This saying (i.e., vv. 35-37) may be a word play on the Aramaic word *talya*, which means both “child” and “servant.”

**9:36 “Taking a child”** Matthew 18:1-18, Luke 9:46-49, and here clearly show that Jesus is talking about new believers, not children.

▣ **“taking him in His arms”** This is another eyewitness detail of Peter. It was even possibly Peter’s house and Peter’s child!

**9:37 “whoever receives one child like this in My name”** “In My Name” means “in the character of Jesus.” There is no magic in the repetition of certain words. The power comes from knowing Jesus and emulating His actions. Our loving response to others because we are followers of Jesus is a way to express our love for Him (cf. Matt. 25:31-45).

From Acts 19:13-16 we know that Jewish exorcists used Jesus’ name, but with surprising results. From Matt. 7:21-23 we know that it is the personal relationship with Christ that is crucial, not just the flippant or even repeated mentioning of the name.

▣ **“and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me”** Jesus characteristically affirms the exalted position of the Father. This is repeatedly recorded in John’s Gospel. This submission to the Father is not one of inequality, but functions within the Trinity.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)

This is a common Greek word for “send” (i.e., *apostellō*) This term has several theological usages:

1. the rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20)
2. the Gospels often use this term of Jesus being sent by the Father. In John the term takes on Messianic overtones (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 and especially John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). It is used of Jesus sending believers (cf. John 17:18; 20:21)
3. the NT used it for disciples
  - a. the original twelve inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
  - b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
    - (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
    - (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
    - (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:6-9)
    - (4) James the Lord’s brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
    - (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6)
    - (6) possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 8:23)
    - (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
  - c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
- D. Paul uses this title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given authority as Christ’s representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:38-41

<sup>38</sup>John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." <sup>39</sup>But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. <sup>40</sup>For he who is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup>For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward."

**9:38 “and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us”** There are several variants in the Greek manuscripts. This verse is hard to interpret. This caused ancient scribes to modify it. The reading most modern English versions accept (following the UBS<sup>4</sup>) is found in MSS  $\aleph$  and B and the Syriac translation tradition.

**9:39 “Do not hinder him”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually implies the stopping of an act in process.

**9:40 “For he who is not against us is for us”** Jesus often used cultural proverbs in His teaching (cf. 2:17,21,22; 3:27; 4:21,22,25; 7:15; 8:35,36,37; 9:40,50; 10:25,27,31,43-44). Compare this with Matt. 12:30 and Luke 11:23.

There is an interesting discussion of the seeming contradiction between Mark 9:40 and Luke 11:23 in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* published by IVP, pp. 466-467. This book is a helpful resource by well-known, evangelical scholars. They assert that the contextual settings of the references remove the seeming discrepancy.

**9:41** See the parallel passages in Matt. 10:42; 25:40. There is a sharp contrast between vv. 38-41 and vv. 42-48. Those not officially connected with Jesus are affirmed in their good deeds, but those who know Him are warned in strong metaphors about their responsibility to new believers. This shocking paradox illustrates the truth of vv. 33-37.

Also this verse mentions kingdom rewards for those who faithfully serve (cf. 9:41; 10:21,28-31 and several times in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:12,46; 6:5-6,16-18,19-21). It is hard to balance a free salvation in the finished work of Christ and believers’ covenant responsibilities to live out their faith.

It is also hard to balance the NT concept of degree of rewards and punishment (cf. Matt. 10:45; 11:22; 18:6; 25:21,23; Mark 12:40; Luke 12:47-48; 20:47). See Special Topic at 12:40.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:42-48

<sup>42</sup>"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you

to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, <sup>44</sup>[where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] <sup>45</sup>If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, <sup>46</sup>[where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] <sup>47</sup>If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, <sup>48</sup>where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED."

**9:42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones”** This refers theologically to new believers. However, there may be a contextual relationship to the lesson just taught from the possessed boy. God loves children and does not want anyone to take advantage of them.

▣ **“who believe”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which emphasizes continuing belief.

Some ancient Greek manuscripts add “in Me” (cf. MSS A, B, C<sup>2</sup>, L, W, and the Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic translations). This seems to be a scribal addition from the parallel in Matt. 18:6 because these words are absent in MSS  $\aleph$  and C. See Special Topic at 1:15.

▣ **“to stumble”** This is literally used of a baited animal trap.

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. This is a strong warning to Christian leaders. The Great Shepherd cares about all the sheep, especially the new and vulnerable ones, so should they!

This is a hyperbole (cf. Matt. 5:29,30,38-46; 6:2-4; 7:3-5; 23:23-24; 10:24-25). Jesus is speaking in metaphorical language of eternal judgment. These Oriental overstatements have confused western believers for generations. Our love for the Bible and our desire to follow Jesus have caused western believers to miss the eastern genres and metaphors of the Bible.

▣ **“a heavy millstone”** This refers to the round upper part of a large animal-drawn millstone. This is another Oriental overstatement, used to accentuate His message.

▣ **“cast into the sea”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which denotes a permanent state. This was a powerful metaphor of judgment. Being desert people, the Jews were afraid of water.

**9:43-47** This is metaphorical (i.e., hyperbolic) language, but it shows the radical commitment required by Jesus (cf. Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teachings*, pp. 8-11).

These verses are a good example of Hebrew poetic, synonymous parallelism, so common in the OT (cf. Mark 2:21-22; 3:4,24-25,28; 4:22,30; 8:17,18; 9:43-47; 10:38,43-44; 13:24-25). Some examples in Mark of antithetical parallelism are 2:19-20; 3:28-19; 4:25; 7:8,15; 8:35 (cf. Stein, pp. 27-29).

**9:43 “If”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which speaks of potential action.

▣ **“enter life”** There are two words for life in the NT: (1) *bios* (i.e., earthly life) and (2) *zoē* (i.e., spiritual life). Jesus is talking about entering the spiritual realm (i.e., eternal life). This is paralleled by the phrase “the Kingdom of God” in v. 47. Believers can enter the kingdom now and, in some sense, even experience heaven now (cf. Eph. 2:5-6).

There are several ways this is depicted in the NT.

1. the world to come, eternal life (Mark 10:17,30)
2. saving. . .losing life (Mark 8:35; Matt. 10:39; Luke 17:33)
3. enter life (Mark 9:43; Matt. 25:46)
4. enter the joy of the Lord (Matt. 25:21,23)

▣ **“hell”** This is *Gehenna* (cf. Jer. 7:31). This was the location of the worship of the Phoenician fertility fire god, Molech, in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, just south of Jerusalem. This was where the firstborn children were sacrificed to the Canaanite fertility god (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 2:23; 7:32; 32:35). The Jews were so ashamed of their ancestors’ idolatry that they turned this area into the landfill, or garbage dump of Jerusalem. Jesus’ metaphors for eternal separation from the Father’s love (fire, worm, stench) are drawn from this garbage dump.

This term is used by Jesus many times, but only once by any other NT author (James 3:6). Hell is as much a biblical reality as heaven (cf. Matt. 25:46). See Special Topic below, II., B.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

### I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *Sheol* characterized
  - 1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
  - 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
  - 3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
  - 4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
  - 5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
  - 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
  - 7. people there called *Repha'im*, Isa. 14:9-11

### II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
  - 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
  - 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
  - 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
  - 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
  - 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
  - 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
  - 1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
  - 2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
  - 3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
  - 4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
    - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
    - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
    - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
    - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
    - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
    - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
    - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
    - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
  - 1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
  - 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).

3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

### III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
  1. human souls exist before their physical life
  2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
  3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
  1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
  2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
  3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
  4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
  5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
  6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

### IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
  1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
  2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
  3. the place of God’s throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.
 

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

### V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death’s Door*

**9:44,46** Verses 44 and 46 are the same as v. 48. Neither are found in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, C<sup>L</sup>, or W. It seems that an ancient scribe took the words from v. 48 and inserted them into vv. 44 and 46.

**9:48 “where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED”** This is a quote from Isa. 66:24. The Jews were so shocked that their ancestors burned their children (II Kgs. 21:6) that they turned this location into the garbage dump of Jerusalem. It is from this site that Jesus draws His metaphorical language about eternal separation from God—Hell. The same term, eternal, used of heaven in Matt. 25:46, is also used in the same verse of judgment.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:49-50

<sup>49</sup>“For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup>Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

**9:49 “salted with fire”** Salt was a means of healing, purification, and preservation. It also was used to seal covenants (cf. Num. 18:19). It was a very important component of life for desert people. The terms salt and fire are synonymous in this context for purification. Verse 49 has many manuscript variations. These were probably due to the uncertainty of (1) how the verse related to v. 48 or (2) what the verse itself meant. Possibly a scribe saw a reference to Lev. 2:13 and put it in the margin of the text. Jesus often used salt as an analogy to communicate spiritual truth (cf. Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34-35).



**9:50** This verse, like v. 49, seems to be somewhat unrelated to the previous context. As v. 49 was included because of the term “fire,” this verse was included because of the term “salt.” It may refer to v. 35. It matters how Christians live!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Jesus “transformed?”
2. How is this incident related to the OT?
3. Why were the disciples confused about Elijah?
4. Why did the disciples still not understand about Jesus’ death and resurrection?
5. Is it wrong for a Christian to be ambitious?  
How did Jesus define greatness?
6. Is Jesus talking about children in vv. 35-37 and 42 or using them as an example for adults?
7. Are there degrees of judgment?
8. Should vv. 43-47 be taken literally?
9. What does salt symbolize?

# MARK 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Teaching About Divorce	Marriage and Divorce	On Marriage and Divorce	Jesus Teaches About Divorce	The Question About Divorce
10:1-12	10:1-12	10:1 10:2-9  10:10-12	10:1 10:2 10:3 10:4 10:5-9 10:10-12	10:1-12
Little Children Blessed	Jesus Blesses Little Children	Blessing the Children	Jesus Blesses Little Children	Jesus and the Children
10:13-16	10:13-16	10:13-16	10:13-16	10:13-16
The Rich Man	Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler	The Rich Man	The Rich Man	The Rich Young Man
10:17-22	10:17-22	10:17-22	10:17 10:18-19 10:20 10:21-22	10:17-22  The Danger of Riches
10:23-31	10:23-31	10:23-27  10:28-31	10:23 10:24-25 10:26 10:27 10:28 10:29-31	10:23-27  The Reward of Renunciation 10:28-31
A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection	Jesus A Third Time Predicts His Death and Resurrection	The Passion Foretold a Third Time	Jesus Speaks a Third Time About His Death	Third Prophecy of the Passion
10:32-34	10:32-34	10:32-34	10:32-34	10:32-34
The Request of James and John	Greatest is Serving	James and John Seek Honor	The Request of James and John	The Sons of Zebedee Make Their Request
10:35-45	10:35-45	10:35-40  10:41-45	10:35 10:36 10:37 10:38 10:39-40 10:41-45	10:35-40  Leadership with Service 10:41-45

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus	Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus	Blind Bartimaeus	Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus	The Blind Man of Jericho
10:46-52	10:46-52	10:46-52	10:46-47	10:46-52
			10:48	
			10:49	
			10:50	
			10:51a	
			10:51b	
			10:52	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. Divorce, 10:2-12 (parallel in Matthew 19:1-12)
- B. Blessing of Children, 10:13-16 (parallel in Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17)
- C. Rich Young Ruler, 10:17-31 (parallel in Matthew 19:16-20:16; Luke 18:18-30)
- D. Prediction of Crucifixion, 10:32-34 (parallel in Matthew 20:17-20; Luke 18:31-34)
- E. Sons of Zebedee, 10:35-45 (parallel in Matthew 20:21-28)
- F. Blind Bartimaeus, 10:46-52 (parallel in Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43)

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1

<sup>1</sup>Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more *began* to teach them.

**10:1 “went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan”** The RSV and the ASV have “came into territories of Judea and trans-Jordan.” The context implies that Jesus was on His final journey to Jerusalem. Apparently He went north through Samaria, crossed over into Galilee, and joined the crowds of pilgrims heading for Jerusalem. Most Jews refused to pass through

Samaria on their way to Jerusalem, so they crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan (i.e., through Perea) and then crossed back to the western side at Jericho. If this is what happened then it explains this confusing verse (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 348, asserts that over one-third of Luke's Gospel occurs between Mark 9 and 10 [i.e., 9:57-18:14]; as well as Matt. 18 and John 7-11).

▣ **“crowds gathered around Him again”** This may refer to (1) pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the feast or (2) the sick, the curious, the Jewish leaders, and disciples. Jesus always drew a crowd.

▣ **“according to His custom”** Whenever Jesus had opportunity to teach, He did (cf. 1:21; 2:13; 4:2; 6:2,6,34; 12:35; 14:49). The content of His message was

1. repent and believe (like John the Baptist's message)
2. the Kingdom of God is entered by faith in Him
3. the Kingdom of God radically changes the way one thinks and lives.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:2-9**

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. <sup>3</sup>And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" <sup>4</sup>They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." <sup>5</sup>But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. <sup>7</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

**10:2 “Pharisees”** See Special Topic: Pharisees at 2:16.

▣ **“testing”** This word *periazō* has the connotation of testing with a view toward destruction (cf. 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Special Topic on terms for “testing” at 1:13). This question was meant to (1) polarize both the people and rabbis over the opinions of the two rabbinical schools of Shammai (conservative) and Hillel (liberal) or (2) arouse Herod Antipas' anger.

▣ **“whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife”** Notice that the Pharisees' question is about divorce, not remarriage. Also, notice that Jesus is responding to a specific question. Jesus is not discussing this subject in a neutral setting. These Pharisees are trying to trap Him into alienating Himself from (1) the followers of Hillel, who had a liberal attitude toward divorce. Matthew 19:3 expands the question to include the “Why” of divorce or (2) Herod Antipas because he was divorced (cf. 6:17-20).

The term “lawful” could refer to the Mosaic Law or the rabbinical traditions (i.e., the Talmud). In response Jesus quotes a passage from Deuteronomy.

**10:4 “TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE”** The quote is from Deut. 24:1-4. Moses enacted a legal procedure to protect the wife (cf. Exod. 21:1-11). This legal procedure would have several requirements.

1. it took some amount of time
2. it took a priest or Levite to write it
3. it probably required the return of the dowry

Hopefully, these procedures would give the couple a chance to reconcile.

It must also be stated that Deut. 24 assumed the right of remarriage for both the man and woman. However, the Deuteronomy passage in context was not addressing the cultural issue of divorce as much as (1) assuring the virginity and faithfulness of the bride and (2) outlining the specific procedures and limits on the remarriage.

The real problem occurred in the liberal interpretation of this passage by the rabbinical school of Hillel (cf. *The Christ of the Gospels* by J. W. Shepherd, pp. 451-457). This school picked up on the term “indecency” and extended its original time frame and meaning. The Pharisees were only quoting Moses to trick Jesus. They were not seeking information.

Jesus confirmed the intent of God for marriage as one man, one woman for life. Anything else is not the ideal. The problem comes in how to balance Jesus' words in this context with His words of forgiveness in other contexts. The standard for Kingdom followers is high, but so, too, is the grace of God! In this area a case-by-case approach is better than rigid legal rules.

In the OT YHWH used divorce to describe His actions toward Israel because of their idolatry (cf. Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:1-8; Hos. 2:2). There are examples in the OT where divorce is required (cf. Gen. 21:8-14; Exod. 21:10-11; Deut. 21:10-14; Ezra 9-10). There is an excellent thought-provoking article in the “Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society” vol. 40 # 4, entitled “Old Testament Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage” by Joe M. Sprinkle.

**10:5 “Because of your hardness of heart”** Jesus describes the Israelites as “hard hearted” (cf. Ezek. 2:4; 3:7). The term “stiff-necked” is a synonymous metaphor (cf. Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5,9; Deut. 9:6,13). They always wanted to do things their way. This is always fallen mankind’s propensity! This attitude was even present in His disciples (cf. Mark 3:5 and 6:52).

The subject of divorce is a good example of the problem of proof-texting. We must allow all of the Bible to speak on every subject. This is not the only biblical passage on divorce and remarriage.

This statement of Jesus is distressing to me. How would I know that Deut. 24:1-4 was not YHWH’s final word on this subject? It is in the Bible. If Jesus had not been confronted with this issue, I probably would never have known its limited relevance. The problem is how many other OT texts are involved in “the hardness of heart” and how many are God’s will for mankind? The only comfort comes in a truly systematic approach to theological subjects, taking into account both Testaments and historical situations (e.g., 7:14-16,17-23). Modern evangelical Christians are too quick to proof-text absolute truth from isolated, atomized texts.

Theologically, Jesus’ rejection of Moses is startling. It was a powerful way of asserting His authority. These Jewish disciples would have been so surprised that Jesus knew why Moses did something and that he had the power and authority from YHWH to overturn it. This section in Mark is theologically parallel to Matt. 5:17-48.

**10:6 “from the beginning of creation”** See Special Topic: *Ktisis* following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: *KTISIS***

This term, *ktisis*, is used in a variety of senses in the NT. The lexicon by Louw and Nida lists the following possibilities.

1. creation (the act of creation, cf. Mark 13:19; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 3:9)
2. creature (that which is created alive, cf. Mark 10:6; Rom. 1:25; 8:39; Col. 1:15;23)
3. universe (all that was created, cf. Mark 13:19; Rom. 8:20; Heb. 9:11)
4. institution (cf. I Pet. 2:13)
5. authority (cf. I Pet. 2:13)

Paul also personifies creation in Rom. 8:18-25. He characterizes God’s new creation, new age, age of the Spirit in II Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15. Believers should live like citizens of the new age (cf. Rom. 6:4).

▣ **“God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE”** Marriage was in God’s original plan of creation (cf. Gen. 1:27). Sex was/is a gift from God to accomplish His purpose of a filled earth (cf. Gen. 1:28).

**10:7 “A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER”** This is another quote from Genesis (cf. 2:24). It shows the high status of marriage, even over parental authority. There was a necessary mental separation from parents even if not a physical separation (i.e., several generations lived together).

**10:8 “AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE”** This quote is also from Gen. 2:24. In marriage, two become one—physically, emotionally, and in every way. This shows the permanency of marriage in God’s plan.

Moses lived many years away from the events recorded in Genesis. In the creation section of Genesis he reads the later issue of the priority of marriage back into a setting of the first couple.

**10:9 “God has joined together”** This is literally “yoked together.” Divorce is one of fallen humanity’s ways of breaking apart what God has established as a societal norm (i.e., marriage is a pillar for stable society, cf. Deut. 5:16,33; 4:40; 32:47, “that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the Lord your God gives you”). This is a good example of a covenant believer preferring his/her will to God’s will.

▣ **“let no man separate”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually meant to stop an act already in process. For a good discussion on marriage, family, and divorce see Frank Staff’s *New Testament Theology*, pp. 296-302.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:10-12**

<sup>10</sup>In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him about this again. <sup>11</sup>And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup>and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

**10:10 “the disciples *began* questioning Him about this”** Matthew 19:10 records the disciples’ astonishment. They were curious about what they had always been taught concerning divorce and remarriage. This phrase shows the pattern of Jesus’ public teaching and private interpretation. This pattern shows how easily Jesus’ words could be misunderstood. These private sessions were the opportunity to train the Twelve in the proper understanding and new radical perspective of the Kingdom of God. Jesus focused ultimate authority in Himself, not the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-19), though He honored and usually affirmed the OT.

**10:11-12 “commits adultery. . .committing adultery”** These are both PRESENT INDICATIVE VERBS. The form (morphology) of the word “adultery” in Koine Greek could be either MIDDLE or PASSIVE VOICE. Matthew 5:32, which deals with the same subject, has an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE. This implies that all the forms are PASSIVE. If this is true, then it is not the divorce and remarriage that was adultery, but the legal act of putting the woman away, which culturally stigmatized her as an adulteress. Literally “she is caused to commit adultery.” This is not a total scriptural ban on remarriage. It relates to a theological aspect of Jewish interpretation (i.e., Hillel vs. Shammai).

However, the dissolution of the marriage covenant between believers (i.e., who swear in Christ’s name to remain married) was, and is, never God’s ideal. Believers are held to a higher “kingdom standard.” Divorce is often the lesser of two evils; it is not the unpardonable sin! See full note at v. 4.

**10:12 “if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery”** This translation follows the Alexandrian Greek texts. The Western texts read “that she leaves husband, but is not divorced and marries someone else, therefore, commits adultery.” The parallel passage in Matt. 19: 1-12 leaves this verse out, probably because Matthew, writing to Jews, had no need to include this. In Judaism women did not have the right to divorce their husbands. Mark, writing to Gentiles, records this to show the universal aspect of Jesus’s teaching. This focuses on the legal equality of husband and wife, reflected in Roman law. This is another evidence that Mark was written to Romans. Jesus is pro family (cf. vv. 13-16)!

▣ **“if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:13-16**

<sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup>Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." <sup>16</sup>And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.

**10:13 “were bringing”** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE. The parents continually brought their children to Him for the traditional rabbinical blessing. This has nothing to do with the salvation of these children. They were already considered a part of Israel by means of circumcision and were waiting for their transition to full covenant adulthood at twelve years of age for girls and thirteen years of age for boys.

▣ **“children”** Luke 18:15 has “infants.” In Jewish circles girls under 12 and boys under 13 were considered children.

▣ **“touch them”** Matthew 19:13 has “lay His hands on them” (cf. v. 16). It was very common in Jesus’ day for parents to ask rabbis to bless their children. The same act is seen in Gen. 48:8ff. This was usually done on the child’s birthday. This blessing was more for the parents’ peace of mind than the “saved vs. lost” status of the children!

▣ **“the disciples rebuked them”** The “them” is ambiguous so early scribes added “those who brought them” (cf. NKJV). However, this is not in the ancient Greek manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, or C, but it is included in A, D, and W. The shorter reading is also found in Matt. 19:13 and Luke 18:15. Children in the Near East do not have the privileged status position they do in the West. The disciples would have thought they were protecting Jesus from disruptive, perfunctory activity. However, for Jesus people were always priority

#### **10:14**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NJB**

**“He was indignant”**

**NKJV**

**“He was greatly displeased”**

**TEV**

**“he was angry”**

This is a strong word used in 10:41 for the disciples’ anger against James and John for asking for the leadership positions and in 14:4 for Judas’ resentment of Jesus being anointed. Matthew also uses this term several times (cf. 20:24; 21:15; 26:8).

The Gospel of Mark reveals Jesus’ humanity by recording His emotions (cf. *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity* by Paul Barnett, p. 156).

1. compassion for a leper (1:40-42)
2. anger at the Pharisees' hardness of heart (3:1-5)
3. indignation to the disciples (10:13-16)
4. love for the rich young ruler (10:17-22)
5. deep distress in Gethsemane (14:33-34)
6. abandonment on the cross (15:34)

Jesus often showed frustration with the disciples (cf. 6:52; 8:17; 9:19). He saw children as significant creations of God and He loved them. He often used children as object lessons for true faith and discipleship.

▣ **“Permit the children to come to Me”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which expresses urgency or intensity.

▣ **“do not hinder them”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually meant to stop an act already in process.

▣ **“the kingdom of God”** This common gospel phrase referred to the reign of God in human hearts now which will one day be consummated over all the earth as it is in heaven. See Special Topic at 1:15.

**10:15 “Truly”** See Special Topic: Amen at 3:28.

▣ **“whoever does not receive”** This referred to adults. Jesus often used children as spiritual examples (cf. Matt. 18). The NT is a revelation for adults. It does not discuss the spiritual status of children!

This Greek term *dechomai* originally meant “to take hold of something.” In that sense it is parallel to *lambanō*. It came to be used in the sense of “receiving” or “believing” or “welcoming.” There may be a subtle distinction in the sense that *dechomai* emphasizes the giver, while *lambanō* reflects an active participation by the receiver (cf. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* by Louw and Nida, vol. 1, p. 572, footnote 31).

The theological thrust is that humans must “receive,” “believe,” “welcome” Jesus. Salvation involves welcoming a person, believing truths about that person (i.e., the gospel), and living a life emulating that person. There is an initial and ongoing volitional aspect to salvation.

▣ **“will not enter it at all”** This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE construction which means “never, no never.”

In a sense Jesus is identifying the Kingdom of God as childlike trust and faith in Himself and His teachings. This sounds intolerant in our day, but it is the clear teaching of the NT. It is often called “the scandal of the exclusivism of the gospel.” Yet it is true. Faith in Jesus is the only way to the Father (cf. John 14:6)! This should engender prayer, witness, and humility, not arrogance, judgmentalism, and pride!

**10:16 “And He took them in His arms”** Here is another eyewitness detail of Peter, like 9:36.

▣ **“began blessing them, laying His hands on them”** Jesus took time for each one. We can trust our children to God’s love so clearly revealed in Jesus. As Jesus raised the social standing and worth of women, so too, children. See Special Topic: Laying On of Hands at 7:32.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:17-22**

<sup>17</sup>As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" <sup>20</sup>And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." <sup>21</sup>Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup>But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

**10:17 “As He was setting out on a journey”** Mark’s Gospel is characterized by Jesus’ travel. This was Mark’s literary technique of structuring his presentation of Peter’s memories (or sermons).

▣ **“a man”** Matthew 19:20 adds the adjective “young”; Matt. 19:22 adds “He was one who owned much property (i.e., rich)”; while Luke 18:18 calls him a “ruler.” This man was apparently a wealthy, moral, significant civic and religious leader. The term “ruler” implies that he was a leader in the local synagogue. See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Peter 3:14.

▣ **“ran. . .and knelt”** This was very unusual action for a wealthy Oriental man in public. This man seems to be sincere in his question and desire to know. This is not an attempt to test or trick Jesus.

▣ **““Good Teacher””** This phrase opened the opportunity for Jesus to probe this man’s spiritual worldview (cf. v. 18). The term “good” (i.e., *agathos*) can be understood in several ways (good, profitable, generous, beneficial, upright, or virtuous). The man meant it one way, but Jesus used it in an ultimate sense.

▣ **““what shall I do””** His understanding of spiritual matters focused on his actions. This man had been steeped in rabbinical performance tradition (cf. Matt. 19:16).

▣ **““to inherit””** This familial word implies a personal relationship with God. In the OT the priests were said to be God’s inheritance and He was theirs because they received no land allocations as did the other tribes. This very question implies the man believed he was fully accepted by God, but just wanted to make sure.

▣ **““eternal life””** The concept of an afterlife (or eschatological kingdom) came from passages such as Dan. 12:2 or Job 14:14; 19:25-27. The Pharisees affirmed an afterlife in physical terms. They were confident that YHWH would grant them eternal life because of (1) their racial identity (i.e., children of Abraham) and (2) their performance of the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud).

**10:18 “good”** This is used to show that the only true standard of comparison is God’s righteousness. The term “righteous” comes from an OT construction term (i.e., river reed), used as a standard or ruler.

▣ **““No one is good except God alone””** Jesus is not making a statement about His own goodness, but He wanted to jolt this man’s shallow thinking about God and true goodness (cf. Matt. 5:48). This may be an OT allusion to I Chr. 16:34; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3; Ps. 25:8; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; Ezra 3:11.

The Matthew parallel changes the ruler’s question to “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16). This change gives a clue to this man’s concept of goodness and his attainment of that goodness (cf. 19:20).

**10:19 “You know the commandments”** This is a summary of the second half of the Ten Commandments, which dealt with how covenant partners are to treat one another.

▣ **““Do not defraud””** This may refer to coveting. This commandment, as it is stated, was not part of the Ten Commandments, nor is it found in this form elsewhere in the OT. Also the parallels in Matt. 19:18-19 and Luke 18:20 do not have this phrase. However, to be fair, the Synoptics all disagree on Jesus’ quote of the Commandments. This again is a common problem with eyewitness testimony. It surely does not affect the inspiration or trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (cf. Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21)**

### **I. Terms**

- A. Literally “The Ten Words” (cf. Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4).
- B. Clement of Alexandria called it “The Decalogue” (*Deka Logous*) and this was followed by the early church fathers.
- C. In the Bible it is also called:
  - 1. “Covenant” (i.e., Hebrew *berith*, BDB 136, Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 9:9)
    - a. from Akkadian, *barah*—to eat (i.e., a common meal)
    - b. from Akkadian, *biritu*—to bind or fetter (i.e., a bond between people)
    - c. from Akkadian, *birit*—between (i.e., arrangement between two parties)
    - d. *baru*—a taste (i.e., an obligation)
  - 2. “Testimony”—Exod. 16:34; 25:16 (i.e., the two tablets)

### **II. Purpose**

- A. They reveal the character of God
  - 1. unique and authoritative (i.e., monotheistic)
  - 2. ethical, both towards society and the individual
- B. They are for
  - 1. all people because they reveal God’s will for mankind and all humans were created in God’s image
  - 2. covenant believers only because it is impossible to understand and obey without God’s help
  - 3. C. S. Lewis—inner moral sense even among primitive tribes (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15) are reflected here.



- C. As all ancient law codes they were
  - 1. to regulate and control interpersonal relationships
  - 2. maintain stability of the society
- D. They bound the heterogeneous group of slave and Egyptian outcasts into a community of faith and law. B. S. Childs, *Old Testament Library, Exodus*—"the eight negative aspects show the outer limits of the covenant boundary. There are no misdemeanors but to break the very fibre of which the divine-human relation consists. The two positive aspects show definition to the life within the covenant. The Decalogue looks both outward and inward; it guards against the way of death and points to the way of life" (p. 398).

### III. Parallels

#### A. Biblical

- 1. The Ten Words are recorded twice, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The slight difference in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments shows the adaptability of these general principles to different situations.
- 2. However, their uniformity points toward the precision with which they were transmitted.
- 3. They were probably read and reaffirmed periodically, as Joshua 24 shows.

#### B. Cultural

- 1. Other law codes from the ancient near East
  - a. Ur-Nammu (Sumerian, 2050 B.C.) from the city of Ur
  - b. Lipit-Ishtar (Sumerian, 1900 B.C.) from the city of Isin
  - c. Eshnunna (Akkadian, 1875 B.C.) from the city of Eshnunna
  - d. Code of Hammurabi (Babylonian, 1690 B.C.) from Babylon but Stela were found in Susa
- 2. The form of the laws in Exodus 20:18-23:37 have much in common with other Ancient Near Eastern law codes. However, the Ten Words are in a unique form which implies their authority (2<sup>nd</sup> person commands—apodictic).
- 3. The most obvious cultural connection is with the Hittite Suzerainty Treaties of 1450-1200 B. C. Some good examples of this similarity can be seen in
  - a. The Ten Words
  - b. The book of Deuteronomy
  - c. Joshua 24
 The elements of these treaties are
  - a. Identification of the King
  - b. Narration of his great acts
  - c. Covenant obligations
  - d. Instruction for depositing the treaty in the sanctuary for public reading
  - e. Deities of parties invoked as witnesses
  - f. Blessing for fidelity and curses for violations
- 4. Some good sources on this subject
  - a. George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*
  - b. Dewey Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*
  - c. W. Bezzel, *Origin and History*
  - d. D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*

### IV. Internal Structure

- A. Alt, in his book, *The Origins of Israelite Law*, was the first to make the distinction between apodictic and casuistic.
  - 1. Casuistic being that common form of ANE Law that contained a condition—"if" = "then"
  - 2. Apodictic being that rare form that expresses a direct command "Thou shall. . ." or "Thou shall not. . ."
  - 3. Roland de Vaux in *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions*, vol. 1, p. 146, says that the casuistic is primarily used in the secular area and the apodictic in the sacred.
- B. The Ten Words are primarily negative in their expression—8 of 10. The form is second person singular. They are either meant to address the entire Covenant community, each individual member, or both!

- C. The two tables of stone (Exod. 24:12; 31:18) are often interpreted as relating to the vertical and horizontal aspects of the Ten Words. Man's relationship to YHWH is spelled out in four commands and man's relationship to other men in the other 6 commandments. However, in light of Hittite Suzerain treaties, they may be two copies of the entire list of commands.
- D. The historical numbering of the Ten Words
  - 1. It is obvious that we have ten regulations. However, the exact distinction is not given.
  - 2. Modern Jews list 20:2 as the first commandment. In order to keep the number at ten they make verses 3-6 the second commandment.
  - 3. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, following Augustine, make Exod. 20:3-6 the first commandment and in order to keep the number at ten, divide verse 17 into two separate commands.
  - 4. Reform churches, following Origen and the early Eastern and Western churches, assert that Exod. 20:3 is the first commandment. This was the ancient Jewish view represented by Philo and Josephus.
- V. How are Christians to Relate to the Ten Words?
  - A. Jesus' high views of Scripture are recorded in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and especially 5:17-48, which shows us the seriousness of the question. His sermon almost seems to be based on the Ten Words and their proper application.
  - B. Theories of relationship
    - 1. For believers
      - a. Roy Honeycutt, *These Ten Words*
        - (1) "We never outgrow the Ten Commandments because we never outgrow God" (p. 7).
        - (2) "Because the Commandments are witnesses to God, however, there is a sense in which their relevance and the relevance of God are so intertwined as to be almost inseparable. Consequently, if God is so relevant for your life, the Commandments will also be deeply relevant for they are written of God's character and demands" (p. 8).
      - b. Personally, we must see these directives as issuing from a faith relation already established. To divorce them from faith and commitment to God is to destroy them. Therefore, for me, they are universal only in the sense that God wants all men to know Him. They are also related to the inner witness of God to His entire human creation. Paul expresses this in Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15. In this sense the Commandments reflect a guiding light that has an indwelling relevance to all mankind.
    - 2. For all men, in all societies, for all times
      - a. Elton Trueblood, *Foundations for Reconstruction*

"The thesis of this small book is that the recovery of the moral law, as represented by the Hebrew Decalogue, is one of the ways in which an antidote to potential decline can be found" (p. 6).
      - b. George Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, "Exodus"
 

"They constitute for all time a condensed summary of human duty which bears divinity upon its face, which is suited for every form of human society, and which, so long as the world endures, cannot become antiquated. The retention of the Decalogue as the best summary of the moral law by Christian communities is justified on these grounds, and itself furnishes emphatic testimony to the excellency of the compendium" (p. 130).
    - 3. As a means of salvation they are not, nor ever have been, God's means for the spiritual redemption of fallen man. Paul clearly states this in Gal. 2:15-4:31 and Rom. 3:21-6:23. They do serve as guidelines for man in society. They point to God and then to our fellow man. To miss the first element is to miss all! Moral rules, without changed, indwelt hearts, are a picture of man's hopeless fallenness! The Ten Words are valid, but only as a preparation to meet God in the midst of our inability. Divorced from redemption they are guidelines without a guide!

**10:20 "I have kept these things"** This man had performed all of the religious requirements of his culture. The Apostle Paul also felt he had also fulfilled the religious requirements (cf. Acts 23:1-2; Phil. 3:6). This man was not lying. He believed he was blameless before God.

**▣ "from my youth up"** This referred to the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony at age 13 by which a boy became a man and responsible for keeping the Law.

**10:21 “Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him”** This is unique to Mark. Jesus’ love, however, did not lower the standards of the Kingdom of God. Here is the paradox of unconditional love requiring an appropriate faith response.

▣ **“One thing you lack”** This comment is similar to 12:34. Jesus recognized that humans were degrees closer or farther from the true Kingdom, which was not conditioned on Mosaic performance or racial identity (cf. John 8:33), but personal faith in Him. This religious leader came in the right spirit, to the right person, asked the right question, but was apparently unable to make a decisive choice! Jesus did not lower the standard! The man went away sad! So close and yet so far!

▣ **“sell all you possess and give to the poor. . .and come, follow Me”** This shows the radical nature of NT faith (cf. Luke 14:33). Jesus knew where this man’s priorities were. To be a Christian one must lay down all other priorities. In one sense this makes Christianity very difficult indeed! In this statement Jesus was focusing on the first half of the Ten Commandments relating to one’s priority commitment to God and God alone (cf. Matt. 5:20).

This text cannot be turned into a law for all believers (i.e., poverty is God’s best). It must be seen in its context. Spiritual relationship between God and mankind must be priority over physical relationship (i.e., wealth, fame, work, family, possessions, even life itself). If possessions are evil in and of themselves, why would they be given to the poor?

One more point. We always focus on Jesus’ demand, but did you realize that Jesus gave this man an unprecedented motivation also. He invited him to join His group of disciples! His opportunity was far greater than its cost!

▣ **“you will have treasure in heaven”** Because of humanity’s rebellion, God’s blessings are reserved for the afterlife (cf. v. 30; Matt. 5-7). Humans must be willing to renounce earthly riches as evidence of spiritual conversion, not as a basis.

**10:22 “he was saddened”** This term can be understood in two senses: (1) shock or surprise or (2) sadness expressed by a downcast or gloomy face. Both of these make sense in this context.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:23-27**

<sup>23</sup>And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup>The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup>They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup>Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

**10:23 “And Jesus, looking around”** This expression is used several times to denote that Jesus took notice of how His teachings affected others (cf. 3:5,34; 5:32; 10:23; 11:11). Only Luke 6:10 is a parallel. This is uniquely a memory of Peter.

▣ **“How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God”** This would have been so surprising to the disciples (cf. v. 24). The OT traditional view, based on Deut. 27-28, was that wealth and health were related to one’s covenant performance and God’s blessing. This is the very issue addressed by Job and Psalm 73. Wealthy humans tend to trust in their own resources instead of God.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH**

- I. Perspective of the Old Testament as a whole
  - A. God is the owner of all things
    - 1. Genesis 1-2
    - 2. I Chronicles 29:11
    - 3. Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11
    - 4. Isaiah 66:2
  - B. Humans are stewards of wealth for God’s purposes
    - 1. Deuteronomy 8:11-20
    - 2. Leviticus 19:9-18
    - 3. Job 31:16-33
    - 4. Isaiah 58:6-10

- C. Wealth is a part of worship
    - 1. the two tithes
      - a. Numbers 18:21-29; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:22-27
      - b. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
    - 2. Proverbs 3:9
  - D. Wealth is seen as a gift from God for covenant fidelity
    - 1. Deuteronomy 27-28
    - 2. Proverbs 3:10; 8:20-21; 10:22; 15:6
  - E. Warning against wealth at the expense of others
    - 1. Proverbs 21:6
    - 2. Jeremiah 5:26-29
    - 3. Hosea 12:6-8
    - 4. Micah 6:9-12
  - F. Wealth is not sinful in itself unless it is priority
    - 1. Psalm 52:7; 62:10; 73:3-9
    - 2. Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-5; 27:24; 28:20-22
    - 3. Job 31:24-28
- II. Unique perspective of Proverbs
- A. Wealth placed in arena of personal effort
    - 1. slothfulness and laziness condemned—Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4-5,26; 12:24,27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4, 13; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16
    - 2. hard work advocated—Proverbs 12:11,14; 13:11
  - B. Poverty versus riches used to illustrate righteousness versus wickedness—Proverbs 10:1ff; 11:27-28; 13:7; 15:16-17; 28:6,19-20
  - C. Wisdom (knowing God and His Word and living this knowledge) is better than riches—Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:9-11,18-21; 13:18
  - D. Warnings and admonitions
    - 1. warnings
      - a. beware of guarantying a neighbor's loan (surety)—Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13
      - b. beware of getting rich through evil means—Proverbs 1:19; 10:2,15; 11:1; 13:11; 16:11; 20:10,23; 21:6; 22:16,22; 28:8
      - c. beware of borrowing—Proverbs 22:7
      - d. beware of fleetingness of wealth—Proverbs 23:4-5
      - e. wealth will not help on judgment day—Proverbs 11:4
      - f. wealth has many "friends"—Proverbs 14:20; 19:4
    - 2. admonitions
      - a. generosity advocated—Proverbs 11:24-26; 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:9,22-23; 23:10-11; 28:27
      - b. righteousness better than wealth—Proverbs 16:8; 28:6,8,20-22
      - c. prayer for need, not abundance—Proverbs 30:7-9
      - d. giving to the poor is giving to God—Proverbs 14:31
- III. Perspective of the New Testament
- A. Jesus
    - 1. wealth forms a unique temptation to trust in ourselves and our resources instead of God and His resources
      - a. Matthew 6:24; 13:22; 19:23
      - b. Mark 10:23-31
      - c. Luke 12:15-21,33-34
      - d. Revelation 3:17-19

2. God will provide our physical needs
    - a. Matthew 6:19-34
    - b. Luke 12:29-32
  3. sowing is related to reaping (spiritual as well as physical)
    - a. Mark 4:24
    - b. Luke 6:36-38
    - c. Matthew 6:14; 18:35
  4. repentance affects wealth
    - a. Luke 19:2-10
    - b. Leviticus 5:16
  5. economic exploitation condemned
    - a. Matthew 23:25
    - b. Mark 12:38-40
  6. end-time judgment is related to our use of wealth—Matthew 25:31-46
- B. Paul
1. practical view like Proverbs (work)
    - a. Ephesians 4:28
    - b. I Thessalonians 4:11-12
    - c. II Thessalonians 3:8,11-12
    - d. I Timothy 5:8
  2. spiritual view like Jesus (things are fleeting, be content)
    - a. I Timothy 6:6-10 (contentment)
    - b. Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment)
    - c. Hebrews 13:5 (contentment)
    - d. I Timothy 6:17-19 (generosity and trust in God, not riches)
    - e. I Corinthians 7:30-31 (transformation of things)

#### IV. Conclusions

- A. There is no systematic biblical theology concerning wealth.
- B. There is no definitive passage on this subject, therefore, insights much be gleaned from different passages. Take care not to read your views into these isolated texts.
- C. Proverbs, which was written by the wise men (sages), has a different perspective than other types of biblical genre. Proverbs is practical and individually focused. It balances and must be balanced by other Scripture (cf. Jer. 18:18).
- D. Our day needs to analyze its views and practices concerning wealth in light of the Bible. Our priorities are misplaced if capitalism or communism are our only guide. Why and how one succeeds are more important questions than how much one has accumulated.
- E. Accumulation of wealth must be balanced with true worship and responsible stewardship (cf. II Corinthians 8-9).

**10:24 “Children”** Jesus called the disciples by the term used in His previous teaching session (cf. vv. 13-16). This reenforces that “children” refers to adult believers.

▣ **“how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God”** This is a shocking statement. Salvation is a free gift in the finished work of Christ for anyone/everyone who responds by repentance and faith. The problem comes when we somehow think we deserve it or merit it! Faith is hard for prideful, self-sufficient, fallen humanity. We would like it better if our relationship with God was difficult and hard so that we could take pride in our achieving it, but as it is, God’s way of repentance and faith is humiliating to fallen mankind, especially wealthy, educated, privileged mankind.

Because this verse is so terse several ancient scribes tried to limit its scope by inserting a qualifying phrase (cf. Bruce M. Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*:

1. “for those who trust in riches” found in MSS A, C, D, and the Textus Receptus

2. “a rich man” in MS W
3. “those who have possessions” in minuscule 1241

**10:25 “camel to go through the eye of a needle”** Like Matt. 23:24, this phrase is an Oriental overstatement. Several scribes and many commentators have tried to explain this statement as (1) a word play between “camel” (*kamēlos*) and “rope” (*kamilus*), which comes from the fifth century or (2) using “needle’s eye” to refer to a small gate in one of the large gates of Jerusalem, but neither of these have historical evidence (cf. Fee and Stuart’s *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p.21). These attempts miss the point of the hyperbole (cf. Matt. 19:24; Luke 18:25).

**10:26 “astonished”** Mark often uses this term (*ekplēssomai*) to describe how the people reacted to Jesus’ teachings and actions (cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18; and a synonym *thambeō* in 10:24). Jesus’ message was so different from the rabbis, both in form (i.e., His authority) and message (i.e., the nature of the Kingdom).



<b>NASB</b>	“saying to Him”
<b>NKJV</b>	“saying among themselves”
<b>NRSV</b>	“said to one another”
<b>TEV</b>	“asked one another”
<b>NJB</b>	“saying to one another”

These differing translations relate to various Greek manuscript variants.

1. NKJV, MSS A, D, W, and Textus Receptus
2. NRSV, TEV, NJB, MS M<sup>a</sup> and the Peshitta translation
3. NASB, MSS  $\aleph$ , B, and C
4. one minuscule manuscript (i.e., 569) and some Coptic translations omit the phrase, as do Matt. 19:25 and Luke 18:26

**10:27** This verse’s emphasis on the grace of God is such a welcome balance to the radical nature of NT discipleship. Humans are unable to approach a holy God, but the wonderful, amazing truth is that He approaches us!

This saying may be an OT allusion to Gen. 18:14 or Jer. 32:17,24. Mankind’s only hope is in the character, promises, and actions of the one true God!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10: 28-31**

<sup>28</sup>Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." <sup>29</sup>Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, <sup>30</sup>but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. <sup>31</sup>But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first."

**10:28 “we have left. . .and followed You”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE (i.e., left once for all), followed by a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (i.e., continue in a state of discipleship). In one sense Peter is recounting the disciples’ decision to become Jesus’ followers. Peter may have been trying to compare their commitments with Jesus’ demand to the rich, young ruler.

**10:29** This verse lists some of the normal aspects of Jewish society in which His followers were involved. It also clearly links their commitment to Him personally (i.e., “for My sake”) and His truths (i.e., “the gospels’ sake”).

The early church was affected by Greek asceticism, particularly celibacy. It is interesting that wives are not specifically mentioned in the lists. This may imply marriage was not something they were expected to give up. However, the inclusion of “children” may indicate that wives were included in the phrase “left house.” One’s priority commitment to Jesus must supersede even family (cf. I Tim. 5:8). This does not imply celibacy, but where one’s ultimate allegiance must lie.

**10:30** Jesus describes the kingdom of God in (1) very earthly ways which parallel what the disciples “missed” in this life and (2) relation to this present world-order. Some of the hundred-fold blessings are enjoyed now by being a part of the People of God.

These normal familial terms basically assure that the family life affected by discipleship is restored through the larger family—the family of God. I do not believe that this phrase is meant to promise abundance of material goods in this life, as did Deut. 27-28. If you place blessings in a reward-for-service structure, then why grace? Material blessings are not the experience of all godly believers, but the joy and abundance of the larger Christian family experiences are!

□ **“along with persecutions”** This is a shocking inclusion, unique to Mark. Christians will be persecuted in this fallen age (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 3:10; II Tim. 2:9-12; I Pet. 4:12-16). This persecution serves several godly

purposes: (1) evidence that we are saved; (2) God's means of molding us into Christlikeness; and (3) proof that the world will be judged.

▣ **“in the age to come”** Interbiblical Judaism (rabbis and Dead Sea Scroll writers) saw history in two ages. The current evil age dominated by angelic and human rebellion and the age where God is going to break into history through the Messiah and set up a new age, an age of righteousness and peace. This is sometimes described in earthly abundance following Deut. 27-28 (cf. Amos 9:13-15) and sometimes in a “new heaven and a new earth” (cf. Isaiah 56-66). From the NT it is obvious that the new age (i.e., the Kingdom of God) was established at the incarnation of Christ at Bethlehem, but it has not yet been fully consummated. The NT clearly reveals the two comings of the Messiah, the first as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and a second as King of Kings. Christians live in the “already, but not yet” of the overlapping of these two Jewish ages. As followers of Christ we are spiritually blessed in both ages (cf. Eph. 2:5-6). See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at 13:8.

▣ **“eternal life”** This is what the rich young ruler asked about—life with God, God's kind of life. Mark uses the adjective (*aiōnios*) for an eternal sin in 3:29 and eternal life here. This applies to the life (i.e., *zōa*) of the new age, the life of the Kingdom of God. It is present in Christ, but will be fully consummated at His return (i.e., *parousia* = presence).

This descriptive phrase is rather rare in the Synoptic Gospels, but so common in John. This is a key phrase throughout John's writings (cf. John 3:15; 4:36; 5:39; 6:54,68; 10:28; 12:25; 17:2,3; I John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11,13,20). See Special Topic: Eternal at 3:29.

**10:31 “first will be last”** This was a startling spiritual truth (cf. Matt. 19:30; 20:16). True wealth and position have nothing to do with earthly standards (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). This reversal of roles was contrary to the disciples' OT works-righteousness mindset (cf. Matt. 19:30; Luke 13:30). See Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel*.

This may have been directed to Peter's outburst of their self-sacrifices to become disciples (cf. 10:28). This passage set the theological stage for 10:41-45. Jesus, the eschatological King of Kings, becomes the Suffering Servant of Isa. 52:13-53:12! Believers must emulate His life/death/service (cf. I John 3:16). The gospel is service, not power; love, not force!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:32-34**

<sup>32</sup>They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, <sup>33</sup>saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup>They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

**10:32 “on the road”** In the OT the metaphor of a way or path was used to describe the godly life (cf. Ps. 23:3; 32:8; 50:23; 119:1; 139:3; Prov. 2:12-15; 4:18; 12:28; 15:24). It also describes John the Baptist's ministry of preparing “the way of the Lord” (cf. Isaiah 40). In Acts the earliest title for the church was “the Way” (cf. 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4,14,22).

Mark seems to structure his Gospel around this biblical metaphor of lifestyle faith (cf. 1:2,3; 8:27; 9:33,34; 10:32,52). Jesus was on a pilgrimage to the cross (cf. 10:45).

▣ **“Jesus was walking on ahead of them”** This could refer to the Apostolic group or a band of pilgrims heading for the feast in Jerusalem.

▣ **“they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful”** This phrase must be related to Jesus' three previous prophecies about His suffering and death in Jerusalem at the hands of the Jewish and Roman leaders. Jesus knew what faced Him there and yet He moved toward it with speed and confidence. They may have been worried about how His suffering and death would affect them!

▣ **“He took the twelve aside”** This is the fourth prediction of Jesus' suffering and death (cf. 8:31; 9:12,31). This is the most detailed of Jesus' predictions. He knew exactly what lay before Him (cf. 10:45). The disciples still could not comprehend its purpose and necessity (cf. 9:32; Luke 9:45; 18:34).

▣ **“began to tell them what was going to happen to Him”** Most of the VERBS in v. 32 are IMPERFECTS, which refer to repeated action. I think this also refers to Jesus' repeated prophecy about His suffering; therefore, “began” is the wrong translation of this IMPERFECT (cf. TEV).

In one sense Jesus was revealing His power and authority by knowing the future and having control over His own death and resurrection (cf. John 10:17-18).

**10:33 “Son of Man”** See note at 8:38c.

▣ **“will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes”** This was a descriptive phrase for the Sanhedrin (cf. 14:43ff) which was the supreme court for the Jews, although in the first century it had only limited authority. See Special Topic at 12:13.

Jesus predicted the reaction of the Sanhedrin. Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the Temple sealed His fate. The first act infuriated the Pharisees and the second act infuriated the Sadducees.

▣ **“will hand Him over to the Gentiles”** This referred to the Roman army of occupation (cf. 15:1). The Sanhedrin did not have the power of capital punishment; only the Roman government did.

**10:34 “They will mock Him”** This was fulfilled by the Roman soldiers in 15:16-20. Mark does not record Jesus’ trial before Herod Antipas (cf. Luke 23).

▣ **“spit on Him”** This was an OT sign of contempt (cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9; Job 17:6; 30:10; Isa. 50:6). Roman soldiers took out their hatred of all Jews and their exclusivistic ways on Jesus (cf. 14:65).

▣ **“scourge”** Scourging was a common practice before crucifixion (cf. 15:15). A person’s hands were tied to a low stake. A soldier used a whip made with pieces of rock, metal, or bone tied to the ends of leather strips about two feet long to beat the prisoner across the back. The action of the whip tore open the body cavity and knocked out the teeth and even the eyes. Many prisoners died from this beating alone. It was a brutal beating (cf. Isa. 52:14).

▣ **“and three days later”** This is literally “after three days.” This time period probably relates to Jonah’s experience (cf. Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4,21; Luke 11:39,32). It is even mentioned by Paul in his summary of the gospel in I Cor. 15:4.

Jesus used this “third day” prophecy in connection with two events: (1) His resurrection from Hades (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), but also (2) His building of a new temple (cf. 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19; Acts 6:14).

There is a Greek manuscript variant connected to this phrase. In the parallels (Matt. 20:19 and Luke 18:33) there is the phrase “on the third day.” This is found here in Mark in MSS A and W. However, Mark’s characteristic phrasing found in 8:31 and 9:31 is “after three days,” which occurs in MSS N, B, C, D, and L.

▣ **“He will rise again”** This is a FUTURE MIDDLE INDICATIVE. It focuses on Jesus raising Himself (cf. John 10:17-18). Most of the passages on the resurrection of Christ are PASSIVE VOICE, focusing on God the Father as the agent of the resurrection showing His acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice. In one sense all of the Trinity is involved in Jesus’ resurrection (i.e., the Spirit in Rom. 8:11). See Special Topic: Resurrection at 8:31

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:35-40**

<sup>35</sup>James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." <sup>36</sup>And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup>They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." <sup>38</sup>But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup>They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized." <sup>40</sup>But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

**10:35 “the two sons of Zebedee”** Matthew 20:20 says it was their mother who asked the question.

▣ **“we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You”** Every time Jesus predicted His suffering and death, His disciples began planning who would take His place as leader! Their mental perspective was still on an earthly kingdom and their being its leadership. The disciples did not understand until Pentecost!

In one sense this incident is recorded to show how much the disciples did not understand (cf. Luke 18:34). This is cutting irony!

**10:37 “right. . .left”** They wanted the places of honor and authority. This incident shows that Peter was not accepted as the obvious leader of the apostolic group. His personality caused him to always speak out first, but they did not sense him as their leader.

▣ **“in Your glory”** Matthew 20:21 has “in your kingdom.” In Mark it refers to the visible manifestation of the eschatological kingdom of God (8:38; 10:37; 13:36).



## SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*DOXA*)

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*, BDB 217) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

**10:38 “You do not know what you are asking”** “Asking” is MIDDLE VOICE, which focuses on the subject, “you yourselves.” The next phrase “are you able” is also MIDDLE VOICE.

▣ **“the cup”** This was used in the OT of a person’s destiny, usually in a negative sense (cf. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17-23; Jer. 25:15-28; 49:12; 51:7; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 32:34; Hab. 2:16; Zech. 12:2). This is the very metaphor used by Jesus in Gethsemane (cf. 14:36) for His crucifixion.

▣ **“the baptism with which I am baptized”** This was a metaphor of suffering, even death (cf. Luke 12:50). His glory involved pain (cf. Heb. 2:18; 5:8).

**10:39** These leaders would be involved in the same persecution and misunderstandings that Jesus experienced (i.e., James in Acts 12:2 and John in Rev. 1:9).

**10:40 “is for those for whom it has been prepared”** This is another example of Jesus’ subordination to the Father’s plan and purpose. There is a divine plan (cf. Acts 2:3; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). The ancient Alexandrian text (MS A\*) adds “by my Father,” which is also found in Matt. 20:23.

The ancient uncial Greek manuscripts were written in all capital letters with no space between words, no punctuation or paragraphing. Sometimes deciding how to divide the sentence into words is confusing. This sentence can be divided in two ways (cf. *Interpreting the New Testament* by Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann translated by Siegfried S. Schotzmann, p. 22)

1. “for whom it is meant”
2. “it is meant for others” (cf. the Syriac translations).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:41-45

<sup>41</sup>Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup>Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; <sup>44</sup>and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

**10:41 “Hearing *this*”** This showed James and John waited until they were alone with Jesus. It also shows the humanness of the Apostles. These were not “super saints,” just men called, equipped, and used by God. The others became indignant, not because of the inappropriateness of James’ and John’s request, but the fact they got to ask first. These chosen Apostles still exhibited selfishness and sin.

**10:42** Jesus again addresses their ambition and misunderstanding of the Kingdom.

**10:43**

NASB	“But it is not this way among you”
NKJV	“Yet it shall not be so among you”
NRSV	“But it is not so among you”

**TEV** “This, however, is not the way it is among you”  
**NJB** “Among you this is not to happen”

These translations reflect a Greek manuscript variant. In some manuscripts (N, B, C\*, D, L, W) the PRESENT TENSE is used (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV), which is also found in the parallel in Matt. 20:26. However, in other manuscripts (A and C<sup>3</sup>) the FUTURE TENSE is found (cf. NKJV and implied in NJB).

▣ **“whoever wishes to be great”** Jesus does not discourage greatness or ambition, but defines true greatness as service and humility (cf. Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35).

▣ **“servant”** This is the term *diakonos*, which later becomes the office/function of deacon. All believers are called to serve (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

**10:44** This helps explain 10:31.

▣ **“slave”** This is the term *doulos*, which referred to a domestic servant.

**10:45** **“the Son of Man”** See note at 8:38c.

▣ **“did not come to be served, but to serve”** This is the true definition of greatness. Jesus models the life of the Kingdom for us to emulate (cf. I Pet. 2:21). This truth was taught symbolically in Jesus’ washing the disciples’ feet in the Upper Room the night He was betrayed (cf. John 13:14-15).

This truth is always difficult for church leadership. But without it there is no servant church.

▣ **“to give His life”** This is the summary verse of Mark’s Gospel. Jesus always refers to His death as His gift or His glory. It denotes the vicarious, substitutionary atonement (i.e., sin offering, cf. II Cor. 5:21) of Christ (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 52:13-53:12).

▣ **“ransom”** This is literally “to buy back” or “to pay a price” (cf. Matt. 20:28; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 1:18). It reflects the OT term used of slaves and prisoners of war being bought back, often by a near kin (*go’el*). Jesus unites in Himself the love and justice of God the Father. Sin costs a life—God provided one!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM**

### **I. OLD TESTAMENT**

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga’al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go’el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Leviticus 25:27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
  - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
  - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
  - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)

B. The theological concept involves several related items.

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
  - a. physical
  - b. social
  - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
  - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
  - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go’el*, BDB 145).

4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
  - a. Father
  - b. Husband
  - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

## II. NEW TESTAMENT

### A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
3. *Luō*, "to set free"
  - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
  - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
    - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
    - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
    - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)
  - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption," "deliverance," or "liberation"
    - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
    - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
    - (3) Jesus' better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
4. *Apolytrōsis*
  - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
    - (1) Luke 21:28
    - (2) Romans 8:23
    - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
    - (4) Hebrews 9:15
  - b. redemption in Christ's death
    - (1) Romans 3:24
    - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - (3) Ephesians 1:7
    - (4) Colossians 1:14
5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links release to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for "all" (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

### B. The theological concept in the NT.

1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
2. Mankind's bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are "near kin" who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).

5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God's word and God's justice with God's love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. I John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of I Cor. 15:12-19 with I Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

▣ **“for”** This is the Greek PREPOSITION *anti*. Sometimes it is joined to the NOUN “ransom” (*lutron* = *antilutron*, cf. I Tim. 2:6). It can mean “instead of,” “on behalf of,” or “in the place of.” The relationship between the PREPOSITIONS *anti* and *hyper* must be determined by the context (cf. II Cor. 5:14; Heb. 10:12; I Pet. 2:21; 3:18; I John 3:16). All of these have the connotation of Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary atonement. He died in our place, bore our sin (cf. Isa. 53:4-6).

▣ **“many”** The term many has been used by some commentators to limit Christ's atonement to “the elect.” The terms “many” and “all” are synonymous in two key passages that deal with redemption. Compare Isa. 53:11-12, “many” with Isa. 53:6, “all.” This parallelism is clearly seen in Rom. 5:18, “all” and Rom. 5: 19, “many.” Jesus paid the price for all, but only those who respond by repentance and faith to the wooing of the Spirit are redeemed.

Mark 10:45 is the theological heart of the Gospel. It came in response to personal ambition. Human ambition must be given back to God as a gift (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Christians must emulate Christ's self-giving (cf. I John 3:16).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:46-52**

<sup>46</sup>Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup>Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him *here*." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." <sup>50</sup>Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" <sup>52</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.

**10:46 “Jericho”** It is one of the oldest cities in the world and was often called the “City of Palms.” The name means “the perfumed.” It was a very fertile and beautiful area. In Jesus' day there were two Jericho's, the old city and a new Roman one about a mile away. It was about 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem at a ford of the Jordan River.

▣ **“as He was leaving”** Matthew 20:29 has “going out”; Luke 18:35 has “approaching.” This confusion is a sign of eyewitness accounts. Remember there were two Jerichos in Jesus' day. He could have been leaving one and approaching the other.

▣ **“a large crowd”** These were pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem for the Passover, along with interested townspeople. Many of the priests of the Temple lived at Jericho. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was very dangerous because of robbers (i.e., the parable of the Good Samaritan); therefore, people traveled in large groups.

▣ **“a blind beggar. . . was sitting by the road”** There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. The NOUN for “beggar” is a rare term (cf. John 9:8). Usually the concept is expressed by a PARTICIPLE (i.e., MSS A, K, W, X and Textus Receptus, cf. NKJV). However, the NOUN (i.e., *prosaiteō*) is in MSS X, B, L (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, and NJB). Manuscript D has a synonym (i.e., *epaiteō*, both formed from the root “to ask”), which is found in the parallel of Luke 18:35. These variants have no effect on the interpretation of the passage.

▣ **“Bartimaeus”** This word means “son of Timaeus.” It is very unusual for Mark to record the names of people whom Jesus healed or exorcized. Interestingly, Matthew has two blind men (cf. Matt. 20:30). Exactly why this occurs is uncertain, but it is a regular difference between Matthew and Mark/Luke.

▣ **“son of Timaeus”** This word in Aramaic meant “unclean.” This was an attempt to explain the name Bartimaeus to a Gentile readership.

▣ **“was sitting by the road”** This was probably where the blind beggar sat every day hoping for alms (i.e., required Jewish offerings to the poor).

**10:47 “Jesus the Nazarene”** Mark uniquely spells out the title as *Nazarēnos* (cf. 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6). Matthew’s Gospel says “He shall be called a Nazarene” (cf. Matt. 2:23).

The village where Jesus grew up was called Nazareth. It is not mentioned in the OT, the Talmud, or in Josephus. It apparently was not settled until the time of John Hyrcanus (i.e., a Hasmonaen), who ruled from 134-104 B.C. The presence of Joseph and Mary from this village implies that a clan of David’s line settled here.

There may be an etymological connection between the name Nazareth and the Messianic title Branch, which is *netzer* in Hebrew (cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Rev. 5:5; 22:16).

It was apparently a term of reproach because of its location far from Jerusalem in a Gentile area (cf. John 1:46 and Acts 24:5; even though this, too, was a prophecy, Isa. 9:1). This may be why it was included in the charge placed over Jesus’ head on the cross.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE**

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to speak of Jesus.

### **A. NT Terms**

1. Nazareth – the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions.

For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross which included this place name was a sign of Jewish contempt.

2. *Nazarēnos* – seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
3. *Nazōraios* – may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; in the NT, Rev. 22:16). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
4. Related to #3 *nāzir*, which means “consecrated one by means of a vow.”

### **B. Historical usages outside the NT.**

1. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group (Aramaic *nāsōrayā*).
2. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22, *nosri*).
3. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
4. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”

“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”

5. It was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 126:1, who used Isaiah’s *netzer* of Jesus.

### **C. Author’s opinion**

I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. The following items cause me to remain uncertain as to its precise meaning:

1. the close association with the Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*) or the similar term *nāzir* (one consecrated by means of a vow)
2. the negative connotation of Galilee
3. little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee
4. it coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e. “Have you come to destroy us?”).

For a full bibliography of studies of this word group, see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346 or Raymond E. Brown, *Birth*, pp. 209-213, 223-225.

▣ **“Son of David”** This was a Messianic title (cf. II Sam. 7), which had nationalistic implications. This title is very rare in Mark (cf. 10:47,48; 12:35).

▣ **“have mercy on me”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which denotes intensity. It was a common prayer in the Psalms (cf. 51:1).

**10:48 “Many were sternly telling him”** This is IMPERFECT TENSE. He was crying again and again and some in the crowd were scolding him again and again (cf. Luke 18:39).

**10:49 “Jesus stopped”** Even on His way to die, Jesus had time for a blind beggar! This is yet another prophetic sign from Isaiah for those who would spiritually see!

▣ **“Take courage, stand up. He is calling for you”** Usually in Koine Greek every phrase is connected with the previous phrase by a CONJUNCTION or a PRONOUN that refers to something in the previous context. When these connectors are absent (as they are here) they draw attention to the statements. These are emphatic, staccato statements. The first and second are PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES and the last a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE.

**10:50 “Throwing aside his cloak”** This cloak was used for (1) sleeping in and (2) collecting food and alms. In a sense this was a symbol of his faith that he would be healed.

▣ **“he jumped up”** These are graphic eye-witness details remembered by Peter.

**10:51 “What do you want Me to do for you”** Jesus was forcing him to state his faith request.

▣ **“I want to regain my sight”** Healing the blind had Messianic significance (cf. Isa. 35:4-5; 42:7,16; 61:1). This was one of the proof-signs the Pharisees had been asking for.

**10:52 “your faith has made you well”** This is literally “saved” (i.e., *sōzō*) in a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE form. This term is used in its OT connotation of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15).

▣ **“began following Him”** Luke 18:45 adds, “glorifying God.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the parents want Jesus to lay hands on their children?
2. Why did the disciples try to stop them?
3. Why was Jesus so indignant towards them?
4. How are children related to the Kingdom of God?
5. What qualities of a child does Jesus seek in disciples?
6. Why did Jesus tell His disciples so often about His approaching death?
7. Define true greatness.

# MARK 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	The Triumphal Entry	Palm Sunday	The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem	The Messiah Enters Jerusalem
11:1-11	11:1-11	11:1-10	11:1-3 11:4-5 11:6-10	11:1-11
		11:11	11:11	
The Cursing of the Fig Tree	The Fig Tree Withered	Fig Tree Cursed	Jesus Curses the Fig Tree	The Barren Fig Tree
11:12-14	11:12-14	11:12-14	11:12-14a 11:14b	11:12-14
The Cleansing of the Temple	Jesus Cleanses the Temple	Cleansing the Temple	Jesus Goes to the Temple	The Expulsion of the Dealers from the Temple
11:15-19	11:15-19	11:15-19	11:15-17 11:18 11:19	11:15-19
The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree	The Lesson of the Withered Fig Tree	The Meaning of the Withered Fig Tree	The Lesson from the Fig Tree	The Fig Tree Withered Faith and Prayer
11:20-25	11:20-24 Forgiveness and Prayer	11:20-24	11:20-21 11:22-25	11:20-25
	11:25-26	11:25		
omits v. 26		omits v. 26	omits v. 26	omits v. 26
The Authority of Jesus Questioned	Jesus' Authority Questioned	On Jesus' Authority	The Question About Jesus' Authority	The Authority of Jesus is Questioned
11:27-33	11:27-33	11:27-33	11:27-28 11:29-30 11:31-33a 11:33b	11:27-33

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The Triumphal Entry was a significant prophetic sign; Jesus was proclaimed as the promised Messiah. It is paralleled in Matt. 21:1-11, Luke 19:29-44, and John 12:12-19.
- B. There is a paradoxical aspect to the Triumphal Entry. Jesus was obviously fulfilling the prediction of Zech. 9:9 and the shouts (i.e., liturgy from the Psalms) of the crowd were an affirmation of His Messiahship. However, it must be remembered that these Hallel Psalms were used to welcome the pilgrims every year as they came for the Passover. The fact that they were applying them to a particular person was the uniqueness of this event. This is clearly seen in the consternation of the religious leaders.
- C. The cleansing of the Temple recorded in vv. 15-19 was apparently the second cleansing by Jesus. The first one is recorded in John 2:15. I do not accept the tenets of literary criticism that telescope these two events into one. Although there is a problem in unifying the chronology of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John, it still seems best to me, because of the differences between the two accounts, to hold to two cleansings, one early in His ministry and one near the end. This could also explain the early and growing animosity of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. This cleansing is paralleled in Matt. 21:12-16 and Luke 19:45-47.
- D. The cursing of the fig tree is an obvious reference to Judaism. It is paralleled in Matt. 21:18-19 and Luke 19:45-48.
- E. The withered fig tree (Mark 11:20-25) is paralleled in Matt. 21:19-22 and Luke 21:37-38.
- F. Jesus' authority is questioned (Mark 11:27-12:12). His authority is the key theological issue! It is paralleled in Matt. 21:23-46 and Luke 20:1-19.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-10

<sup>1</sup>As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, <sup>2</sup>and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here." <sup>4</sup>They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. <sup>5</sup>Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup>They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission. <sup>7</sup>They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. <sup>8</sup>And many spread their coats in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. <sup>9</sup>Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; <sup>10</sup>Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

**11:1 "Bethphage"** The name means "house of figs" or "place of unripe figs." It was located on the ridge overlooking Jerusalem called the Mount of Olives. In rabbinical literature it is a suburb of Jerusalem. It was close to the major road from Jericho, which the pilgrims used.

▣ **"Bethany"** The name means "house of dates." John 11:18 says it is two miles southeast of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho and it was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. During the three major annual feast days (cf. Lev. 23) everyone around Jerusalem shared their homes with pilgrims. Jesus stayed here when He was in Jerusalem (cf. 11:11; Matt. 21:17).

▣ **"near the Mount of Olives"** These two small villages were located on the same ridge (about 2.5 miles long) that is known as "the Mount of Olives."



▣ **“He sent two of His disciples”** Possibly Peter was one of them and recalled this event to John Mark.

**11:2 “immediately”** See note at 1:10.

▣ **“colt”** This incident is prophetic fulfillment (cf. Gen. 49:11; Zech. 9:9). Donkeys were the common mounts of Jewish kings (this is also mentioned in the Mari Tablets and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Epic). This young donkey would fulfill the kingly prophecies (only the king rode on his donkey, this young donkey had never been ridden), but would also communicate that He came in peace. At the Second Coming the Lord will appear on a white charger as King of Kings and Judge of the universe (cf. Rev. 19:11-16). The rabbis recognized these Messianic prophecies and said if Israel was worthy, even for one day, that the Messiah would come on the clouds of glory, but if not, He would still come one day on a donkey.

▣ **“no one yet has ever sat”** The royal donkey was ridden by no one but the king. An example of this powerful symbol is seen when Solomon rides David’s donkey (cf. I Kgs. 1:33).

**11:3 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which speaks of potential action.

▣ **“The Lord has need of it”** It is often hard to determine in the Gospel accounts whether Jesus is using His prophetic insight or has personally prearranged some events (cf. 14:12-16).

This is a rare use in Mark of *kurios* as a title applied to Jesus (cf. 7:28; 11:3). Since the word can mean “master” or “owner,” it may refer to the owner of the colt. However, the context implies it refers to Jesus. The theological significance would be that this is the OT way of referring to YHWH (cf. v. 9) by the name *Adon*, which means “owner,” “master,” “lord,” or “husband” in Hebrew.

▣ **“and immediately he will send it back here”** It is uncertain whether this is a comment by the disciples about the colt or part of Jesus’ message. There are several Greek manuscript variants because of the ambiguity of the phrase.

**11:5 “Some of the bystanders”** The parallel in Luke 19:33 has “owners.”

**11:7 “put their coats on it”** The coats functioned as a cushion or riding blanket. Their colors may have given a festive or parade look (i.e., royal procession).

**11:8 “many spread their coats in the road”** Who does the “many” refer to? If to the disciples, then this is a gesture of Jesus’ kingship (cf. II Kgs. 9:13). If to the townspeople of Jerusalem one is surprised that they did this every year because of the damage caused by a donkey walking on clothing on a hard road. Possibly they had heard of Jesus and recognized His uniqueness.

▣ **“others spread leafy branches”** John 12:13 states that they were palm branches which grew on the Mount of Olives (cf. Josephus). Apparently they were a sign of victory or triumph (cf. Rev. 7:9). This ritual was performed each year by the residents of Jerusalem at the feasts of Tabernacles and Passover for the bands of pilgrims approaching the city. This year the significance of the approaching King was fulfilled.

Although this symbolic act was regularly done during the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:13-20), those branches were much larger than these. The branches used here were smaller and are comparable to the modern custom of spreading rose petals before a bride as she walks down the aisle. These three acts—(1) the coats on the animals, (2) the coats spread in the road, and (3) the branches spread in the road—show that they were honoring Jesus as the coming royal (cf. Psalm 2), Davidic (cf. II Samuel 7) Messiah.

**11:9 “Those. . .shouting”** Apparently the liturgy of vv. 9-10 was part of the annual festivals. They had significant nationalistic implications (i.e., this may have been an Aramaic idiom for “royal power to”). However, since they were repeated every year, the Romans were not threatened by them. This year they uniquely found fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. What had been liturgy was now revelation!

▣ **“Hosanna”** The Hebrew idiom means “welcome Him.” It was part of the Hallel Psalm 118:25, which was quoted every year as the pilgrims came to Jerusalem. It literally meant “save now” (cf. II Sam. 14:4; II Kgs. 6:16), but had become a standard greeting.

▣ **“BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD”** This is a quote from Ps. 118:26. This was one of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) quoted at the Feast of Passover. Psalm 118 had powerful Messianic implications (cf. v. 22). The parallel in Luke 19:38 has “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.” This annual ritual liturgy has become fulfilled prophecy!

**11:10 “the coming kingdom of our father David”** This has nationalistic implications (cf. II Samuel 7; Hos. 3:5). One wonders whether this was a regular litany every year or was added to specifically refer to Jesus. This may have been a reference to Zech. 9:9. Matthew 21:5 states this prophecy directly. The parallel in Luke 19:39 shows the intense anger of the Pharisees when these phrases were directly attributed to Jesus.

▣ **“Hosanna in the highest”** This idiom could mean (1) praise to God in heaven or (2) may the God in heaven save Him (i.e., Jesus).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:11**

<sup>11</sup>Jesus entered Jerusalem *and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.*

**11:11 “the temple”** This word (*hieron*) meant the whole temple area, not just the central shrine (Holy of Holies and Holy Place).

▣ **“it was already late”** They had already walked 18 miles from Jericho. The temple area may have already been almost empty. Jesus wanted all to see His symbolic act of cleansing and restoration of the temple to its original God-given purpose.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. <sup>13</sup>Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup>He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening.

**11:12** Jesus used a common need (i.e., food) as an opportunity to teach a powerful lesson of judgment and rejection.

**11:13 “a fig tree”** Remember the name of the city of Bethphage means “house of figs.” There were obviously many of these fruit trees in the area.

▣ **“in leaf”** There has been much discussion among commentators about this fig tree and why Jesus came to it.

1. it was in a sheltered place and had leaves early, so perhaps it might also have small figs
2. the leaves show promise, but no fulfillment, just as Israel did
3. Jesus was not looking for the figs, but the precursor “knobs” that are also sometimes eaten (cf. F. E. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 56 or *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 441-442).

I think it was a symbolic act of judgment (cf. Luke 13:6-9), like the cleansing of the Temple, of the Judaism of Jesus’ day, headquartered in Jerusalem. It foreshadowed the destruction in A.D. 70 by the Roman general (later Emperor) Titus and the eschatological judgment because of their unbelief in Jesus (cf. v.14).

▣ **“it was not the season for figs”** It was the Passover season and usually not even full leaves had appeared yet. This phrase shows the symbolic nature of the event. Notice also Jesus spoke out loud so the disciples could hear. Israel was often symbolized by fig trees (however, usually grape vines, cf. Jer. 29:17; Hos. 9:10; Joel 1:7; Mic. 7:1-6). The fact that the tree had many leaves showed that it should have produced fruit. Israel did not! This account of the fig tree is split into two sections with the cleansing of the temple placed between to signify that it refers to the judgment of God on the first century Jewish religious system and its leaders (as did the cleansing of the temple). It is uncertain whether all Israel or only the illegal leaders (i.e., those Sadducees who had purchased the office from the Romans) were so condemned. This judgment on Israel is emphasized in Luke 13:6-9 and Mark 12:1-12.

**11:14** This is a strong permanent judgment!

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (‘OLAM)**

The etymology of the Hebrew term ‘*olam*, עולם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
  - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
  - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
  - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16

- d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
- e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
- 2. future time
  - a. one's life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
  - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
  - c. continuous existence
    - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
    - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:6
  - d. existence of God
    - (1) Gen. 21:33
    - (2) Exod. 15:18
    - (3) Deut. 32:40
    - (4) Ps. 93:2
    - (5) Isa. 40:28
    - (6) Jer. 10:10
    - (7) Dan. 12:7
  - e. the covenant
    - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
    - (2) Exod. 31:16
    - (3) Lev. 24:8
    - (4) Num. 18:19
    - (5) II Sam. 23:5
    - (6) Ps. 105:10
    - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
    - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
  - f. special covenant with David
    - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
    - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
    - (3) II Chr. 13:5
    - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
    - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
  - g. God's Messiah
    - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
    - (2) Isa. 9:6
  - h. God's laws
    - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
    - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
    - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
    - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
    - (5) Isa. 59:21
  - i. God's promises
    - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
    - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
    - (3) Ps. 18:50
    - (4) Isa. 40:8
  - j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
    - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4
    - (2) Exod. 32:13

- (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
  - (1) Exod. 12:14; 12:14,17,24
  - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
  - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
  - (1) I Kgs. 8:P13
  - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
  - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
  - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
  - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
  - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
  - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
  - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
  - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:7; 89:1
  - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
  - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
  - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
  - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
  - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
  - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:15-18**

<sup>15</sup>Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; <sup>16</sup>and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. <sup>17</sup>And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." <sup>18</sup>The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

**11:15 “entered the temple”** This refers specifically to the court of the Gentiles where the merchants had their booths (those booths were owned by the family of the High Priests). John’s Gospel records an earlier cleansing (cf. John 2:13ff). Jesus was not always the mild-mannered man we think!

This act challenged the Sadducees’ authority as the pilgrims’ acts and words at the triumphant entry challenged the Pharisees. These acts doomed Jesus to death (cf. v. 18).

▣ **“began to drive out those who were buying and selling”** This may be an allusion to Zech. 14:21, “there will no longer be a Canaanite (i.e., merchant) in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.”

▣ **“those who were buying and selling”** These merchants represented the High Priest’s family, who had purchased both the priesthood and the concession rights from Rome (i.e., at least from A.D. 30 on. I think Jesus was crucified in A.D. 34).

▣ **“the money changers”** The temple tax was ½ shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13). In Jesus’ day the only shekel was a Tyrian shekel. The pilgrims were charged 1/24 of a shekel to exchange their currency.

▣ **“those who were selling doves”** A dove was the sacrifice for the poor, lepers, and women. The normal price was tripled at these booths. Even when the pilgrims brought their own sacrificial animals from home, the priest would regularly find some fault in them and demand that they purchase another animal.

**11:16 “would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple”** This phrase is unique to Mark. The Court of the Gentiles had become a shortcut between the city and the Mount of Olives. It had lost its distinctive religious purpose as a place for the nations to come to YHWH.

**11:17 “MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS”** This is a quote from Isa. 56:7. It shows the universal love of God. Matthew, writing to Jews, leaves off this last phrase.

▣ **“it a ROBBERS’ DEN”** This is a quote from Jeremiah’s famous temple sermon that dealt with faithless ritual and religious superstition (cf. Jer. 7:11). In the name of religion, larger profits were being made at the expense of a place of quietness and prayer for the Gentiles. The term “robbers” can mean “insurrectionists.”

**11:18 “The chief priests and the scribes”** Wealthy families controlled the office of High Priest. This was no longer a family position related to Aaron, but an office sold by the Romans to the highest bidder.

▣ **“scribes”** This category of leaders began with Ezra. In Jesus’ day most of them were Pharisees. They interpreted the practical aspects of the Law for the common person, especially from the Oral Tradition (i.e., Talmud). This group is similar in function to the modern rabbi. See Special Topic at 2:6.

▣ **“began seeking how to destroy Him”** This is an IMPERFECT tense. It could mean “began” (cf. NASB, TEV), but it could also imply that they sought over and over again from this point on to kill Jesus (cf. NRSV).

All the VERBS in v. 18 are IMPERFECTS, referring to actions started and continued through this last week of Jesus’ life. Recurrent patterns begin to emerge. The Triumphal Entry and the cleansing of the temple sealed Jesus’ doom, as He knew it would.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:19**

<sup>19</sup>When evening came, they would go out of the city.

**11:19** This verse should probably go with the paragraph vv. 15-18. This is another eyewitness detail of Peter. This little phrase is recorded differently in several Greek manuscripts (some have the PLURAL and some have the SINGULAR).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:20-26**

<sup>20</sup>As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots *up*. <sup>21</sup>Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” <sup>22</sup>And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. <sup>23</sup>Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you. <sup>25</sup>Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. <sup>26</sup> [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]”

**11:20 “As they were passing by”** They took the same route from Bethany to Jerusalem.

▣ **“withered from the roots *up*”** This was the sign of total rejection of Israel (cf. Mark 12:1-12), or at least her current leaders.

**11:21 “Being reminded, Peter said”** Peter vividly remembers!

**11:22 “Jesus answered saying to them”** Peter again acted as the spokesman for what all of the disciples were thinking.

▣ **“Have faith in God”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a common theme in the Gospel. Faith/trust/belief (i.e., NOUN, *pistis*; VERB, *pisteuō*; see Special Topic at 1:15) in YHWH (and His Messiah) is fallen mankind’s only hope. This current world system and its power structures must not attract our attention and concern. God is with us and for us. Look to Him, only to Him!

This symbolic act of judgment and rejection affected their entire traditional belief system. We can only imagine how radical Jesus' new teachings and perspectives were to these traditional first century Jewish men! Jesus powerfully and obviously rejected the Temple (as it was functioning) and the leadership, both Sadducees and Pharisees (both liberal, Hillel, and conservative, Shammai).

There is a Greek manuscript variant which adds the Greek conditional particle *ei* (i.e., "if") in MSS  $\aleph$  and D. This would make it a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. However, its presence could be a Hebraic idiom denoting a direct quote. It is not included in MSS A, B, C, L, or W, nor in any of the English translations used in this commentary. It probably came from scribes wanting to make it exactly like Luke 17:6 or even Matt. 21:21 (which has *ean* instead of Luke's *ei*).

**11:23 "Truly"** This is literally "amen." See Special Topic at 3:28.

▣ **"to this mountain"** This was (1) possibly a literal reference to the Mount of Olives (cf. Zech. 14:4) or (2) a figure of speech as in Zech. 4:7. This phrase was a common rabbinical metaphor for removing difficulties.

In the OT this type of "leveling" language was often used to describe YHWH's coming (cf. Mic. 1:3-4; Hab. 3:6). He would be available to all the earth because the mountains would be leveled (cf. Zech. 14:4) and the valleys filled up and the rivers and seas dried up, so that all may approach Him in Jerusalem. This metaphorical nature language is replaced in the NT by needy people coming to Jesus, not Jerusalem. In the NT "Jerusalem" in Palestine becomes "new Jerusalem," the holy city coming down out of heaven. The NT has universalized the OT prophecies related to geographical Jerusalem and Palestine.

▣ **"into the sea"** This is possibly a reference to the Dead Sea, which is visible from the Mount of Olives.

▣ **"does not doubt"** Faith is a key factor in prayer (cf. James 1:6-8).

▣ **"heart"** See Special Topic at 2:6.

**11:23-24 "they will be granted him"** This statement must be balanced with other biblical statements about prayer. This is a good example of why we should not proof-text one verse and say "the Bible says it, that settles it." The Bible says a lot more about prayer. The worst thing God could do to most Christians is answer their prayers! Usually we pray for all the wrong things. Please read and contemplate the Special Topic below on "Effective Prayer."

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER**

### **A. Related to one's personal relationship with the Triune God**

1. Related to the Father's will
  - a. Matt. 6:10
  - b. I John 3:22
  - c. I John 5:14-15
2. Abiding in Jesus  
John 15:7
3. Praying in Jesus' name
  - a. John 14:13,14
  - b. John 15:16
  - c. John 16:23-24
4. Praying in the Spirit
  - a. Eph. 6:18
  - b. Jude 20

### **B. Related to one's personal motives**

1. Not wavering
  - a. Matt. 21:22
  - b. James 1:6-7
2. Asking amiss  
James 4:3
3. Asking selfishly  
James 4:2-3

C. Related to one's personal choices

1. Perseverance
  - a. Luke 18:1-8
  - b. Colossians 4:2
  - c. James 5:16
2. Discord at home  
I Peter 3:7
3. Sin
  - a. Psalm 66:18
  - b. Isaiah 59:1-2
  - c. Isaiah 64:7

All prayer is answered, but not all prayer is effective. Prayer is a two-way relationship. The worst thing God could do is grant believers' inappropriate requests. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at Col. 4:3. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at I John 5:14.

**11:24 “that you have received them”** There is a manuscript variant related to the TENSE of the VERB *lambanō*. The AORIST, which reflects a Hebrew idiom of an expected fulfillment, is found in MSS  $\aleph$ , B, C, L, and W. Apparently this was altered by scribes (1) to the FUTURE TENSE to match Matt. 21:22 (cf. MS D and the Vulgate) or (2) to the PRESENT TENSE (cf. MS A and the Armenian translation).

**11:25 “Whenever you stand praying”** The normal posture for prayer was standing with the eyes open and the head and arms lifted upward. They prayed as if in dialogue with God.

▣ **“forgive, if you have anything against anyone”** Our forgiveness of others is the evidence, not the basis, of our forgiveness (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 18:21-35; Luke 6:36-37; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; James 2:13; 5:9). The unforgiving person has never met God!

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. Believers often hold grudges. Knowing God in Christ must change these attitudes. We are forgiven so much how can we treat others made in God's image with contempt and settled animosity?

▣ **“your Father who is in heaven”** Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where “Father” appears as the Greek, *Pater*, it may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. 14:36). This familial term “Daddy” or “Papa” reflects Jesus' intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term “Father” was used only in the OT for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of our new relationship with God through Christ.

**11:26** This verse is absent in the Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, L, and W. It is included with several variations in MSS A, D, K, X, and the Peshitta translation and the Diatessaron (i.e., the four Gospels merged into one). It seems that an ancient scribe added this phrase from Matt. 6:15.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:27-33**

<sup>27</sup>They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, <sup>28</sup>and began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" <sup>29</sup>And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>30</sup>Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me." <sup>31</sup>They began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' <sup>32</sup>But shall we say, 'From men'?"— they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. <sup>33</sup>Answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

**11:27 “They came again to Jerusalem”** This seems to imply they left Jerusalem and spent the nights back in Bethany, possibly with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

▣ **“walking in the temple”** Can you imagine how the merchants were watching Him! Jesus did not hide from or avoid confrontation. This was His moment of impact on Jerusalem.

▣ **“the chief priests and the scribes and the elders”** This is the full designation for the Sanhedrin. This was an official ruling body of seventy members in Jerusalem, which developed out of the Great Synagogue of Ezra’s day. It was made up of the High Priest and his family, local scribes, and wealthy, influential elders from the Jerusalem area. See Special Topic at 12:13.

**11:28 “By what authority are You doing these things”** This has been and is the crucial question about Jesus. Where did He get His power and authority to speak and act? Jesus did not fit their expected mold of what YHWH’s Messiah would do and say!

**11:29** Jesus often used this second-question technique when dealing with those who tried to trick or trap Him (cf. 2:6-9,19,25-26; 3:23-24; 10:3,37-39; 12:14-16). He would be open with them if they would be open to Him (cf. v. 33).

**11:30 “Was the baptism of John from heaven”** Jesus answered their question with a question that dealt with their rejection of John the Baptist. They were not really seeking truth (cf. vv. 31-33). They were more concerned with their reputations and maintaining power (cf. v. 32).

**11:31 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which means potential action.

**11:33** Jesus answers them by the parable in Mark 12:1-12, which is one of the most severe condemnations of Israel and her leaders in the entire NT.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does this chapter reveal about Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus accept the title “Son of David?”
3. How is faith related to healing?
4. Why is the Triumphal Entry so important?
5. What did the shouts of the crowd mean?
6. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?
7. Why did Jesus drive out the merchants? Was it the first time?
8. Why didn’t the Temple police stop Him?
9. Can we ask God for anything? How is our faith related to answered prayer?
10. Why is v. 28 such a crucial question?



# MARK 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants	The Parable of the Wicked Vine Dressers	Parable of the Vineyard	The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard	Parable of the Wicked Tenants
12:1-11	12:1-12	12:1-11	12:1-8 12:9-11	12:1-11
12:12		12:12	12:12	12:12
Paying Taxes to Caesar	The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar?	Paying Taxes to Caesar	The Question About Paying Taxes	On Tribute to Caesar
12:13-17	12:13-17	12:13-17	12:13-14 12:15 12:16a 12:16b 12:17a 12:17b	12:13-17
The Question About the Resurrection	The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection?	Questions About the Resurrection	The Question About Rising from Death	The Resurrection of the Dead
12:18-27	12:18-27	12:18-23 12:24-27	12:18-23 12:24-27	12:18-23 12:24-27
The Great Commandment	The Scribes: Which is the First Commandment of All?	The Great Commandment	The Great Commandment	The Greatest Commandment of All
12:28-34	12:28-34	12:28-34	12:28 12:29-31 12:32-33 12:34	12:28-34
The Question About David's Son	Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord?	David's Son	The Question About the Messiah	Jesus Not Only Son but Also Lord of David
12:35-37	12:35-37	12:35-37	12:35-37a	12:35-37
The Denouncing of the Scribes	Beware of the Scribes	Sayings On Pride and Humility	Jesus Warns Against the Teachers of the Law 12:37b-40	The Scribes Condemned by Jesus
12:38-40	12:38-40	12:38-40		12:38-40
The Widow's Offering	The Widow's Two Mites	The Widow's Offering	The Widow's Offering	The Widow's Mite
12:41-44	12:41-44	12:41-44	12:41-44	12:41-44

## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)

### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. Representatives of the Sanhedrin ask questions (cf. 11:27-12:12) and Jesus responds by a parable (Mark 12:1-12). This is paralleled in Matt. 21:33-46 and Luke 20:1-19.
- B. The Pharisees and the Herodians ask about paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13-17), which is paralleled in Matt. 22:15-22 and Luke 20:20-26.
- C. The Sadducees ask a question about the resurrection (Mark 12:18-27), which is paralleled in Matt. 22:23-33 and Luke 20:27-40.
- D. A scribe asks about the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-34), which is paralleled in Matt. 22:34-40.
- E. Jesus asks the Jewish leadership a question about the Messiah’s relationship to David (Mark 12:35-37), which is paralleled in Matt. 22:41-46 and Luke 20:41-44.
- F. Jesus denounces the scribes (Mark 12:38-40) and it is paralleled in Matt. 23:1-39 and Luke 20:45-47.
- G. The widow’s sacrificial offering (Mark 12:41-44) is paralleled in Luke 21:1-4.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-11

<sup>1</sup>And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. <sup>2</sup>At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. <sup>3</sup>They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. <sup>5</sup>And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others. <sup>6</sup>He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>7</sup>But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' <sup>8</sup>They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. <sup>9</sup>What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*'; <sup>11</sup>THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"

12:1 “to speak to them in parables” “Them” refers directly to the representatives from the Sanhedrin (cf. 11:27), but indirectly to the large crowd.

This whole chapter is a series of questions from the religious leaders:

1. from the Sanhedrin (11:27-12:12)
2. from the Pharisees and Herodians (12:13-17)
3. from the Sadducees (12:18-27)
4. from a scribe (12:28-34)
5. from Jesus (11:29-33; 12:9,35-37)

▣ **“PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER”** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 5:1-2. The grapevine was one of the symbols for the nation of Israel (as was the fig tree in 11:12-14,20-25). Isaiah 5 uses a vineyard folk song to address Israel. Matthew includes several other parables that also address the nation of Israel (cf. Matt. 22:1-14). It is hard to determine whether God rejected

1. Israel’s illegal, non-Aaronic leaders
2. her self-righteous, judgmental legalism
3. the unbelief of the nation as a whole. Israel, with all her covenantal privileges (cf. Rom. 9:4-5), was also held responsible for the Mosaic covenant responsibilities (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

It is striking how different Isaiah 5’s procedure in describing God’s free and available love for all who would come is compared to the stringency and violence of these tenant farmers in this parable.

**12:2 “At the harvest time”** Usually it took at least five years for grapevines to begin to produce at commercial levels. The owner expected to participate in his investment.

**12:2,4,5,6 “sent”** God attempted to communicate by sending several representatives, even His own son. This represents the long suffering of God and His desire to establish a covenantal relationship.

**12:2,4,5 “a slave”** These slaves represent the OT prophets. Matthew, as is characteristic, has two slaves (cf. Matt. 21:34). This text clearly shows how Matthew combines Mark’s account of several slaves one at a time into one occurrence.

**12:3 “beat”** This refers to a severe beating. It literally means “to skin” or “to flay” (cf. 13:9).

**12:4 “wounded him in the head”** This refers to being repeatedly struck on the head. It shows the abuse suffered by those who represented God and spoke for Him (i.e., the OT prophets) to His rebellious covenant people.

▣ **“and treated him shamefully”** This is a VERBAL form of the name Timothy, which means “honor” or “worth” with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE. It connotes “to treat with contempt” or “total disrespect” (cf. James 2:6).

**12:5** Why did God send servant after servant? God created humanity for a purpose—fellowship with Himself. He wants to establish a people like Himself, but they/we will not. Yet, God tries again and again to reach us! He has a “love that will not let go” for His creation.

**12:6 “He had one more to send, a beloved son”** This obviously refers to Jesus. This same phrase is used by the Father at Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 1:11; 3:17) and transfiguration (9:7; Matt. 17:5). This same truth is seen in John 3:16 and Heb. 1:1-2. It is a combination of a Royal Psalm (i.e., 2:7) and a Suffering Servant passage (i.e., Isa. 42:1).

**12:7 “and the inheritance will be ours”** This refers legally to the Jewish law of “ownerless property” that could be claimed by right of possession. It reflects mankind’s fallen attitude of “more and more for me at any cost.” Humanity wants to be its own god (cf. Genesis 3).

**12:8 “threw him out of the vineyard”** Improper burial shows the tenant’s complete contempt for the owner and his son! The Gospel parallels describe the sequence as they threw the son out of the vineyard and then killed him (cf. Matt. 21:39; Luke 19:15). This was probably to identify further with Jesus’ death outside of the city walls of Jerusalem.

**12:9** This verse shows God’s response toward those who killed His only Son. In Mark’s Gospel Jesus asks the crowd a question. This reflects Isa. 5:3-4, where the prophet asks a question. The hearers are condemned out of their own mouths (i.e., Matt. 21:41). God will hold all conscious creation accountable for the gift of life. We will reap what we sow (cf. 4:21-25; Matt. 13:12; 25:14-30; Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“will give the vineyard to others”** The “others” seems to refer to the church, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

**12:10 “Have you not even read this Scripture”** This is Jesus’ introduction to a verse that was used every year in their processions welcoming pilgrims into Jerusalem (i.e., Ps. 118:22-23). This question is a recurrent theme in the NT (cf. Matt. 21:42; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:32-33; I Pet. 2:7). It explains the problem of how Israel could miss her Messiah (cf. Rom. 9:11). This statement was a slap in the face to the very ones who claimed to know the Scriptures!

▣ **“STONE”** This is a quote of Ps. 118:22-23 from the Septuagint. In rabbinical writings, this stone referred to Abraham, David, or the Messiah (cf. Dan. 2:34-35). This same Psalm was quoted as part of the Hallel Psalms, used to welcome the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the Passover.

▣ **“BUILDERS”** In rabbinic writing this term referred to the scribes. The comments Jesus added are recorded in Matt. 21:43-44. Notice here the builders are condemned for missing the most important truth: Jesus is the promised Messiah.

▣ **“THE CHIEF CORNER stone”** The metaphor of the Messiah as a stone comes from several OT usages.

1. YHWH’s strength and stability (cf. Ps. 18:1-2)
2. Daniel’s vision in chapter 2 (cf. Dan. 2:34-35,48)
3. the building component which either
  - a. starts the building (i.e., cornerstone)
  - b. holds the weight of the building (i.e., center stone or keystone in the arch)
  - c. finishes the building (i.e., top stone or cap stone)

The building refers metaphorically to the people of God, the true temple (cf. I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE

### I. OT Usages

- A. The concept of a stone as a hard durable item which made a good foundation was used to describe YHWH (cf. Ps. 18:2).
- B. It then developed into a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16).
- C. It came to represent a judgment from YHWH by the Messiah (cf. Isa. 8:14; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45).
- D. This developed into a building metaphor.
  1. a foundation stone, the first placed, which was secure and set the angles for the rest of the building, called “the cornerstone”
  2. it could also refer to the final stone put in place, which holds the walls together (cf. Zech. 4:7; Eph. 2:20,21), called “the capstone,” from the Hebrew *rush* (i.e., head)
  3. it could refer to the “key stone,” which is in the center of the doorway arch and holds the weight of the entire wall

### II. NT Usages

- A. Jesus quoted Psalm 118 several times in reference to Himself (cf. Matt. 21:41-46; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17)
- B. Paul uses Psalm 118 in connection with YHWH’s rejection of faithless, rebellious Israel (cf. Rom. 9:33)
- C. Paul uses the concept of a “cornerstone” in Eph. 2:20-22 in reference to Christ
- D. Peter uses this concept of Jesus in I Pet. 2:1-10. Jesus is the cornerstone and believers are the living stones (i.e., believers as temples, cf. I Cor. 6:19), built on Him (i.e., Jesus is the new Temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-20). The Jews rejected the very foundation of their hope when they rejected Jesus as Messiah.

### III. Theological Statements

- A. YHWH allowed David/Solomon to build a temple. He told them that if they kept the covenant He would bless them and be with them (cf. II Samuel 7), but if they did not the temple would be in ruins (cf. I Kgs. 9:1-9)!
- B. Rabbinical Judaism focused on form and ritual and neglected the personal aspect of faith (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). God seeks a daily, personal, godly relationship with those created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Luke 20:17-18 contains frightening words of judgment, as does Matt. 5:20, directed at Judaism.
- C. Jesus used the concept of a temple to represent His physical body (cf. John 2:19-22). This continues and expands the concept of personal faith in Jesus as the Messiah is key to a relationship with YHWH (i.e., John 14:6; I John 5:10-12).
- D. Salvation is meant to restore the damaged image of God in human beings (Gen. 1:26-27 and chapter 3) so that fellowship with God is possible. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness now. Believers are to become living stones (i.e., little temples built on/patterned after Christ).
- E. Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the capstone of our faith (i.e., the Alpha and Omega). Yet also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. To miss Him is to miss everything. There can be no middle ground here!

**12:11** This verse implies that everything which occurred in the rejection and death of Jesus was foreknown and prophesied (cf. Isa. 53:10; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; I Pet. 1:20).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:12**

<sup>12</sup>And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.

**12:12 “they were seeking to seize Him”** The Jewish leaders understood the parable was referring to them and they acted in the predicted way (i.e., tried to kill Him).

▣ **“they feared the people”** These leaders looked to current opinions (cf. 11:18,32; Matt. 21:26,46; Luke 19:48) rather than to God’s Word in order to decide their actions.

▣ **“they understood that He spoke the parable against them”** This pronoun “they” can be understood in one of two ways: (1) the leaders were afraid of Jesus’ popularity with the crowd (cf. Matt. 21:45) or (2) the crowd also understood that the parable was addressed to the religious leaders.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:13-17**

<sup>13</sup>Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. <sup>14</sup>They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? <sup>15</sup>Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." <sup>16</sup>They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.

**12:13 “they sent”** This refers to the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish religious authority (cf. 11:27).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN**

#### **I. Sources of Information**

- A. The New Testament itself
- B. Flavius Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*
- C. The Mishnah section of the Talmud (i.e., Tractate “Sanhedrin”)

Unfortunately the NT and Josephus do not agree with the rabbinical writings, which seem to assert two Sanhedrins in Jerusalem, one priestly (i.e., Sadducean), controlled by the High Priest and dealing with civil and criminal justice and a second controlled by the Pharisees and scribes, concerned with religious and traditional issues. However, the rabbinical writings date from A.D. 200 and reflect the cultural situation after the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman general, Titus, in A.D. 70. The Jews reestablished their religious life at a city called Jamnia and later (i.e., A.D. 118) moved to Galilee.

#### **II. Terminology**

The problem with identifying this judicial body involves the different names by which it is known. There are several words used to describe judicial bodies within the Jewish community of Jerusalem.

- A. *Gerousia* – “senate” or “council.” This is the oldest term which was used toward the end of the Persian period (cf. Josephus’ *Antiquities* 12.3.3 and *II Maccabees* 11:27). It is used by Luke in Acts 5:21 along with “Sanhedrin.” It may have been a way of explaining the term to Greek speaking readers (cf. *I Macc.* 12:35).
- B. *Synedrion* – “Sanhedrin.” This is a compound from *syn* (together with) and *hedra* (seat). Surprisingly this term is used in Aramaic, but it reflects a Greek word. By the end of the Maccabean period this had become the accepted term to designate the supreme court of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 26:59; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66; John 11:47; Acts 5:27). The problem comes when the same terminology is used of local judicial councils outside Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 5:22; 10:17).
- C. *Presbyterion* – “council of elders” (cf. Luke 22:66). This is an OT designation for tribal leaders. However, it came to refer to the supreme court in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 22:5).

- D. *Boulē*— This term “council” is used by Josephus (i.e., *Wars* 2:16:2; 5:4:2, but not the NT) to describe several judicial bodies: (1) the Senate in Rome; (2) local Roman courts; (3) the Jewish supreme court in Jerusalem; and (4) local Jewish courts. Joseph of Arimathea is described as a member of the Sanhedrin by a form of this term (i.e., *bouleutēs*, which means “councilor,” cf. Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50).

### III. Historical Development

Originally Ezra is said to have set up the Great Synagogue (cf. Targum on Song of Songs 6:1) in the post-exilic period, which seems to have become the Sanhedrin of Jesus’ day.

- A. The Mishnah (i.e., Talmud) records that there were two major courts in Jerusalem (cf. *Sanh.* 7:1).
1. One made up of 70 (or 71) members (*Sand.* 1:6 even states that Moses set up the first Sanhedrin in Num. 11, cf. Num. 11:16-25).
  2. One made up of 23 members (but this may refer to local synagogue courts).
  3. Some Jewish scholars believe there were three 23-member Sanhedrins in Jerusalem. When the three got together they, along with the two leaders, constituted “the Great Sanhedrin” of 71 members (i.e., *Nasi* and *Av Bet Din*).
    - a. one priestly (i.e., Sadducees)
    - b. one legal (i.e., Pharisees)
    - c. one aristocratic (i.e., elders)
- B. In the post-exilic period, the returning Davidic seed was Zerubbabel and the returning Aaronic seed was Joshua. After Zerubbabel’s death, no Davidic seed continued, so the judicial mantle passed exclusively to the priests (cf. *I Macc.* 12:6) and local elders (cf. *Neh.* 2:16; 5:7).
- C. This priestly role in judicial decisions is documented by Diodorus 40:3:4-5 during the Hellenistic period.
- D. This priestly role in government continued during the Selucid period. Josephus quotes Antiochus “the Great” III (223-187 B.C.) in *Antiquities* 12.138-142.
- E. This priestly power continued during the Maccabean period according to Josephus’ *Antiquities* 13:10:5-6; 13:15:5.
- F. During the Roman period the governor of Syria (i.e., Gabinius from 57-55 B.C.) established five regional “Sanhedrins” (cf. Josephus’ *Antiquities* 14.5.4; and *Wars* 1.8.5), but this was later annulled by Rome (i.e., 47 B.C.).
- G. The Sanhedrin had a political confrontation with Herod (i.e., *Antiquities* 14.9.3-5) who, in 37 B.C., retaliated and had most of the high court killed (cf. Josephus’ *Antiquities* 14.9.4; 15.1.2).
- H. Under the Roman procurators (i.e., A.D. 6-66) Josephus tells us (cf. *Antiquities* 20.200,251) that the Sanhedrin again gained considerable power and influence (cf. Mark 14:55). There are three trials recorded in the NT where the Sanhedrin, under the leadership of the High Priest’s family, executes justice.
  - a. Jesus’ trial (cf. Mark 14:53-15:1; John 18:12-23,28-32)
  - b. Peter and John (cf. Acts 4:3-6)
  - c. Paul (cf. Acts 22:25-30)
- I. When the Jews revolted in A.D. 66, the Romans subsequently destroyed Jewish society and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Sanhedrin was permanently dissolved, although the Pharisees at Jamnia tried to bring a supreme judicial court (i.e. *Beth Din*) back into Jewish religious (but not civil or political) life.

### IV. Membership

- A. The first biblical mention of a high court in Jerusalem is II Chr. 19:8-11. It was made up of (1) Levites; (2) priests; and (3) the heads of families (i.e., elders, cf. *I Macc.* 14:20; *II Macc.* 4:44).
- B. During the Maccabean period it was dominated by (1) Sadducean priestly families and (2) local aristocracy (cf. *I Macc.* 7:33; 11:23; 14:28). Later in this period “scribes” (Mosaic lawyers, usually Pharisees) were added, apparently by Alexander Jannaeus’ wife Salome (76-67 B.C.). She is even said to have made the Pharisees the predominant group (cf. Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews* 1.5.2).
- C. By Jesus’ day the court was made up of
  1. the families of the High Priests
  2. local men of wealthy families
  3. scribes (cf. 11:27; Luke 19:47)

## V. Sources Consulted

- A. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, IVP, pp. 728-732
- B. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 268-273
- C. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 10, pp. 203-204
- D. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 214-218
- E. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 14, pp. 836-839

▣ **“Pharisees”** This was the religious group that developed during the Maccabean period. They were very committed to the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud). See Special Topic: Pharisees at 2:16.

▣ **“Herodians”** This was a political group that supported the reign of the Idumean Herods. They were also in favor of the Roman status quo. Normally Pharisees and Herodians were enemies. The fact that they were cooperating shows how serious they perceived Jesus’ teachings to be. See Special Topic: Herodians at 1:14.

▣ **“in order to trap Him”** This is literally “to catch.” It was used of capturing wild animals. It had become a metaphor for acquiring information so as to show a fault or error (cf. Luke 11:54). They thought that by asking Him this question they had Him trapped between two opposing groups: the Roman authorities and the people.

**12:14 “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for you are not partial, but teach the way of God in truth”** These leaders were flattering Jesus in order to find fault, but in reality, they were speaking correctly about Him. Jesus handled truth exactly like YHWH handles truth. This is supreme irony! Their tricky statements were in reality the greatest compliment.

▣ **“You are not partial”** The literal Hebrew idiom is “for You do not look at the face of men.” This historically referred to the Judges of Israel. When they tried a case, the defendants kept their heads bowed so that their identity could not be seen. If a judge put his hand under the chin and lifted the face so as to see the person’s identity, the chances for bias increased. Therefore, justice was to be blind!

▣ **“Is it lawful to pay”** This is a legal question related to the Mosaic legislation, but also relating to Israel’s current domination by Rome. This is the type of question that scribes dealt with daily. There were two ways to answer the question, one based on the Mosaic texts and one related to the reality of Roman law and occupation. These leaders wanted legal grounds to bring the Roman government into their religious dilemma (cf. Luke 20:20). By answering “yes” He would offend the zealots; by answering “no” He would be arrested by the Roman government.

▣ **“poll-tax”** This was a transliteration of the Latin term “census.” It was a head tax which Rome placed on all conquered peoples. This empire-wide tax (i.e., A.D. 6-20) on males fourteen years through sixty-five years and on women twelve to sixty-five, who lived in imperial provinces went directly to the Emperor. It was the reason why Joseph had to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem with the pregnant Mary (cf. Luke 2:1-6).

**12:15 “He, knowing their hypocrisy . . . why are you testing Me”** The term hypocrisy (*hupokrisis*) originally referred to actors playing a part behind a mask. They pretended to be someone they were not (cf. Matt. 23:28; Luke 12:1; 20:20; I Tim. 4:2; I Pet. 2:1). It came to be used of manipulative people who tried to trick others into thinking that which was untrue. Everything these leaders said (ironically) to Jesus in v. 14 was contradicted in their actions of v. 15. The term testing (*peirazō*) had the added connotation of testing with a view towards destruction or failure. See Special Topic: Terms for Testing at 1:13.

▣ **“a denarius”** This silver coin was the only way this tax could be paid. It was a day’s wage for a common laborer or soldier. It was a symbol of Rome’s control. See Special Topic at 12:42.

**12:16 “Whose likeness and inscription is this”** Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) was the current Emperor. On this coin was a claim of the deity of the Emperor. On the front of the coin it said “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the Divine Augustus.” On the back of the coin was a picture of Tiberius seated on a throne and the inscription “Highest Priest.”

**12:17 “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”** Believers are to obey civil authority because God has ordained it (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13-14). The Greek term “render” may imply “give back to someone that which belongs to him.”

☐ **“and to God the things that are God’s”** Although the state has divine sanction, it does not have divine status. If the state claims ultimate authority, this is to be rejected by the followers of the one true God. Many have tried to promote and support the modern political doctrine of the separation of church and state from this verse. In a very limited sense this verse does address the issue, but it is surely not a Scriptural support for this modern political theory. This theory is a truth seen from history, not primarily from Scripture.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:18-27**

<sup>18</sup>*Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying,*  
<sup>19</sup>*“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife and LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.”* <sup>20</sup>*There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children.* <sup>21</sup>*The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise;* <sup>22</sup>*and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also.* <sup>23</sup>*In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.”* <sup>24</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?”* <sup>25</sup>*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.* <sup>26</sup>*But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob?’* <sup>27</sup>*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”*

**12:18 “Sadducees”** This was an aristocratic, priestly sect of Judaism that controlled the High Priesthood and the Sanhedrin. They were the wealthy, politically powerful “in” group. They were very conservative and accepted only the writings of Moses (i.e., Genesis through Deuteronomy) as authoritative (i.e., rejected the Oral Tradition).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SADDUCEES**

#### **I. Origin of the Group**

- A. Most scholars believe the name comes from Zadok, one of David’s high priests (cf. II Sam. 8:17; 15:24). Later, Solomon exiled Abiathar for supporting the rebellion of Adonijah (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27) and recognized Zadok as the only High Priest (cf. I Kgs. 2:35). After the Babylonian exile this priestly line was reestablished in Joshua (cf. Hag. 1:1). This Levitical family was chosen to administer the temple. Later those who were of this priestly tradition and their supporters were called Zadokites or Sadducees.
- B. A ninth century A.D. rabbinical tradition (*Abot* of Rabbi Nathan) says Zadok was a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho (2nd century B.C.), Zadok misunderstood a famous saying of his mentor involving “after dead rewards” and developed a theology that denied an afterlife and thereby also denied the resurrection of the body.
- C. Later within Judaism the Sadducees are identified with the Boethusians. Boethus was also a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho. He developed a theology similar to Zadok, which also denied an afterlife.
- D. The name Sadducee does not appear until the days of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.), which is cited by Josephus (cf. *Antiquities* 13:10:5-6). In *Antiquities* 13.5.9 Josephus says there existed “three schools of thought,” Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.
- E. There is a rival theory that they came from the time of the Selucid rulers’ attempts to Hellenize the priesthood under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.). During the Maccabean revolt a new priesthood was started in Simon Maccabees (142- 135 B.C.) and his descendants (cf. I Macc. 14:41). These new Hasmonean high priests were the possible start of the aristocratic Sadducees. The Pharisees developed during this same time from the Hasidim (i.e., “the separated ones,” cf. I Macc. 2:42; 7:5-23).
- F. There is the modern theory (i.e., T. W. Manson), that Sadducee is a transliteration of the Greek term *sundikoi*. This term referred to local authorities who interfaced with Roman authority. This may explain why some Sadducees were not aristocratic priests, but were members of the Sanhedrin.

#### **II. Distinctive Beliefs**

- A. They were the priestly conservative faction of the sects of Jewish life during the Hasmonean and Roman periods.
- B. They were especially concerned with temple procedures, protocol, rituals, and liturgy.
- C. They held to the written Torah (i.e., Genesis - Deuteronomy.) as authoritative, but rejected the Oral Tradition (i.e., Talmud).



- D. They, therefore, rejected many of the cherished developed doctrines of the Pharisees
  - 1. the resurrection of the body (cf. Matt. 22:23; Mark. 12:18; Luke 20:27; Acts 4:1-2; 23:8)
  - 2. the immortality of the soul (cf. *Antiquities* 18:1:3-4; *Wars* 2:8:14)
  - 3. the existence of an elaborate hierarchy of angels (cf. Acts 23:8)
  - 4. they took the “eye-for-an-eye” (i.e., *lex talionis*) literally and supported physical punishment and the death penalty (instead of a monetary settlement)
- E. Another area of theological dispute was predestination vs. free will. Of the three groups mentioned by Josephus
  - 1. the Essenes affirmed a kind of determinism
  - 2. the Sadducees placed an emphasis on human free will (cf. *Antiquities* 13.5.9; *Wars* 2.8.14)
  - 3. the Pharisees held somewhat of a balancing position between the other two
- F. In one sense the conflicts between the two groups (i.e., Sadducees - Pharisees) mirrored the tension between priests and prophets in the OT.

Another tension arose from the fact that the Sadducees represented the social and landed gentry. They were the aristocrats (cf. Josephus’ *Antiquities* 13.10.6; 18.14-5; 20.9.1), while the Pharisees and scribes were the scholars and pious among the people of the land. This tension could be characterized as the temple in Jerusalem vs. the local synagogues throughout the land.

Another tension may have represented the Sadducean rejection of the influence of Zoroastrianism on Pharisaic theology. Example: a highly developed angelology, a dualism between YHWH and Satan and an elaborate view of the afterlife in glowing physical terms. These excesses by the Essenes and Pharisees caused a reaction in the Sadducees. They return to the conservative position of Moses-only theology in an attempt to thwart the speculations of other Jewish groups.

## II. Sources of Information

- A. Josephus is the chief source of information about the Sadducees. He was biased both by his commitment to the Pharisees and his interests in portraying a positive image of Jewish life to the Romans.
- B. The other source of information is the rabbinical literature. However, here, too, a strong bias is evident. The Sadducees denied the relevance and authority of the Oral Tradition of the Elders (i.e., the Talmud). These Pharisaic writings obviously describe their opponents in negative, possibly exaggerated (i.e., straw man, tactics) ways.
- C. There are no known writings of Sadducees themselves which have survived. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 all documents and influence of the priestly elite were destroyed.

They wanted to maintain regional peace and the only way to do that in the first century was to cooperate with Rome (cf. John 11:48-50).

**12:19 “Moses wrote for us”** This is referring to Moses’ discussion of Levirate marriage found in Deut. 25:5-10.

▣ **“that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES”** This Jewish law came to be known by “Levirate marriage.” The term was from Latin for “a husband’s brother.” Inheritance rights were very important in Israel because God had given the Promised Land to the tribes by lot (cf. Joshua 12-19). Therefore, if a man died with no male heir, his brother was expected to marry the widow and father a child by the widow; the child then became the heir of all of the dead brother’s property.

**12:23** Here is the purpose of the question, to ridicule the concept of a bodily resurrection in a physical afterlife.

**12:24** Jesus’ withering question focuses on the Sadducees’ lack of understanding of both the Scriptures and God. Its grammatical form expects a “yes” answer.

**12:25 “but are like angels in heaven”** This brief reference has caused much speculation. Angels in the OT are usually masculine (except for Zech. 5:9). Does this brief comment of Jesus refer to their sexuality or sexual unions? How does this affect one’s understanding of Gen. 6:1-2? Maybe we are trying to infer too much theology from this Sadducean encounter. Heaven is an entirely different relational experience than earth. Exactly how this new interpersonal, eternal, spiritual realm functions is uncertain. The Bible has chosen not to reveal much information about the afterlife. The Sadducees took this lack of information as an excuse to deny the reality of the afterlife. It is better to affirm the reality based on the promises of God and Christ, but be willing to remain uninformed until death. The Bible provides all that believers need to know!

Jesus asserted that there is no sexual aspect (i.e., procreation) to existence in heaven. There are many questions one would like to ask about this, but no further clarification is given in the NT. It may simply refer to the fact that angels are created by God and not by sexual procreation.

**12:25-26 “angels. . . But regarding the fact that the dead rise again”** The Sadducees denied both the existence of angels and the resurrection. The Pharisees affirmed both.

**12:26 “But regarding the fact that the dead rise again”** There are several texts in the OT that affirm this truth (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 23:6; Isa. 25:6-9; 26:14-19; Dan. 12:2). Yet the afterlife in the OT is a veiled reality. The progressive revelation of the NT clarifies and defines the reality, but still in veiled, metaphorical language. Heaven is a sure promise and truth, but its exact nature is a mystery.

▣ **“in the book of Moses”** Jesus asserts that Moses is the source of Deuteronomy. This question also expects a “yes” answer.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MOSES’ AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH**

- A. The Bible itself does not name the author (as is true of many OT books). Genesis has no “I” sections like Ezra, Nehemiah, or “we” sections like Acts.
- B. Jewish tradition
  - 1. Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it
    - a. Ben Sirah’s *Ecclesiasticus*, 24:23, written about 185 B.C.
    - b. The Baba Bathra 14b, a part of the Talmud which gives traditional authorship of OT books
    - c. Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, living about 20 B.C. to A.D. 42
    - d. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, living about A.D. 37-70
  - 2. YHWH reveals truth to Moses
    - a. Moses is said to have written for the people
      - (1) Exodus 17:14
      - (2) Exodus 24:4, 7
      - (3) Exodus 34:27, 28
      - (4) Numbers 33:2
      - (5) Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24-26
    - b. God is said to have spoken through Moses to the people
      - (1) Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
      - (2) Deuteronomy 6:1
      - (3) Deuteronomy 10:1
    - c. Moses is said to have spoken the words of the Torah to the people
      - (1) Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
      - (2) Deuteronomy 5:1
      - (3) Deuteronomy 27:1
      - (4) Deuteronomy 29:2
      - (5) Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
      - (6) Deuteronomy 32:44
      - (7) Deuteronomy 33:1
  - 3. OT authors attribute it to Moses
    - a. Joshua 8:31
    - b. II Kings 14:6
    - c. Ezra 6:18
    - d. Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1-2
    - e. II Chronicles 25:4; 34:12; 35:12
    - f. Daniel 9:11
    - g. Malachi 4:4

C. Christian tradition

1. Jesus attributes quotes from the Torah to Moses
  - a. Matthew 8:4; 19:8
  - b. Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26
  - c. Luke 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; 24:27, 44
  - d. John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23
2. Other N.T. authors attribute quotes from the Torah to Moses
  - a. Luke 2:22
  - b. Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:1, 15-21; 26:22; 28:23
  - c. Romans 10:5, 19
  - d. I Corinthians 9:9
  - e. II Corinthians 3:15
  - f. Hebrews 10:28
  - g. Revelation 15:3
3. Most early Church Fathers accepted Mosaic authorship. However, Ireneaus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all had questions about Moses' relationship to the current canonical form of Genesis (cf. D. 2. on page 3).

D. Modern Scholarship

1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers, which was a characteristic of Egyptian scribes):
  - a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
  - b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
  - c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
  - d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
2. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques, however, differed from country to country:
  - a. In Mesopotamia, they were careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote from about 1400 B.C.: "the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign."
  - b. In Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls) followed this approach.
3. Scholars of the 19th century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graf-Wellhausen). This theory was based on:
  - a. the different names for God
  - b. apparent doublets in the text
  - c. the literary form of the accounts
  - d. the theology of the accounts
4. Supposed sources and dates
  - a. J source (use of YHWH from southern Israel) – 950 B.C.
  - b. E source (use of Elohim from northern Israel) – 850 B.C.
  - c. JE combined – 750 B.C.
  - d. D source – 621 B.C. (The Book of the Law, II Kgs. 22:8, discovered during Josiah's reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah's time to support his reform.).
  - e. P source (priestly rewrite of OT, especially ritual and procedure) – 400 B.C.
5. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was
  - a. The High Priest (or another of his family) at the time of the writing
  - b. Jeremiah the Prophet
  - c. Ezra the Scribe – IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

6. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale's Commentaries*, "Leviticus" pp. 15-25).
7. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
  - a. Doublets, like Genesis 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given, followed by a specific account. This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
  - b. The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
    - (1) YHWH – the Covenant name for deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 103).
    - (2) Elohim – deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 104).
  - c. It is common in non-biblical near eastern literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (cf. R. K. Harrison, pp. 522-526).
8. There is an emerging theory that there were scribes (in different parts of Israel) working on different parts of the Pentateuch at the same time under the direction of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 10:25). This theory was first proposed by E. Robertson's *The Old Testament Problem*.
- E. The evidence from Ancient Near Eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style (patriarchal) oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration, but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis (cf. P. J. Wiseman's *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*). Beginning in Genesis 37, a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites' days in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moses' formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral (patriarchal) traditions. His writings have been updated by later scribes. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT have been illustrated by modern archaeology.

▣ **"I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM"** This reference to Exod. 3:2-6 is a play on the tense of the Hebrew VERB "to be." A form of this VERB (i.e., CAUSATIVE) becomes the covenant name for the God of Israel, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14). The title implies that God is the ever-living, only-living One. Because He lives, His people live also (cf. v. 27; Ps. 103:15-17; Isa. 40:6-8; I Pet. 1:24-25). Notice that Jesus affirms the reality of the afterlife from the writings of Moses, which was the only section of the Hebrew canon that these Sadducees accepted as authoritative for doctrine.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:28-34**

<sup>28</sup>One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; <sup>30</sup>AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup>The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; <sup>33</sup>AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

**12:28 "scribes"** These were usually non-priestly (i.e., not Levite), who became scholars in the Oral Traditions (i.e., the Talmud) of the Jews. In the OT local Levites interpreted the sacred writings to the people (cf. Neh. 8). As the local synagogue developed in Babylonian exile, the role of local teachers and interpreters grew in significance. By Jesus' day most of these scribes were Pharisees. They developed historically (i.e., after the destruction of the Temple) into rabbinical Judaism. See Special Topic at 2:6.

▣ **"heard them arguing"** The parallel in Matt. 22:34-35 seems to imply ulterior motives, but Mark's Gospel implies he was truly interested in the theological question.

**12:29 “HEAR”** Jesus quotes from Deut. 6:4-5, but not from the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint (the parallel in Matt. 22:37 is closer to the MT, but not exact). Jesus’ quote adds a phrase to both the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Septuagint Greek text. This exact quote is unknown from any OT text. The LXX changes the Hebrew “heart” to “mind” or “understanding.” But this quote adds the phrase “with all your mind” to the three-fold phrasing (i.e., heart, soul, strength) in the MT and LXX. The NJB recognizes this by printing the phrase as not part of the OT quote (i.e., not in italics). It is interesting that the Greek uncial manuscript D (i.e., Bezae) from the fifth century omits the phrase “and with all your mind” entirely. This may reflect the original because its absence matches the scribes’ response in v. 33.

In the Matthew parallel (i.e., 22:32) Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Here the Hebrew clause “with all your strength” is left out. It is so surprising that Mark and Matthew disagree with each other and with both the MT and the LXX. This is a perfect example of the looseness of many of the OT quotes in the NT (even those attributed to Jesus). Here is where precision is impossible. They all (i.e., LXX, Matt. and Mark) reflect the general sense of the quote from Moses.

This OT text (i.e., Deut. 6:4-5) is called the *Shema*, which is the Hebrew word “hear.” It means to hear so as to do. It has become the Jewish affirmation of monotheism. It is prayed daily by faithful Jews and on every Sabbath. There are other texts on the oneness and uniqueness of God in the Prophets, but this one is in the writings of Moses (i.e., Gen. – Deut.) and is, therefore, binding on all of Jesus’ listeners (i.e., Sadducees and Pharisees).

**12:30** Jesus’ answer shows that there are two aspects to God’s primary commandment: (1) the unity and uniqueness of God and (2) our total commitment to Him and Him alone!

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic at 2:6.

**12:31 “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR”** This is a quote from Lev. 19:18 in the Septuagint. Jesus linked theological truth to practical, ethical demands (cf. Zechariah 7-8). It is impossible to love God and hate those made in His image (cf. I John 2:9-11; 3:15; 4:20).

It is impossible to love your neighbor (i.e., covenant brother or sister) as yourself if you do not love yourself. There is an appropriate self-love which is based on God’s priority love for mankind. We are His creation, fashioned in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). We must rejoice in our giftedness and accept our physical, mental, and psychological makeup (cf. Ps. 139). To criticize ourselves is to criticize our Maker! He can transform our fallenness into a reflection of His glory (i.e., Christlikeness).

Christianity involves a personal faith commitment to God through Christ. It starts as an individual volitional decision of repentance and faith. However, it issues in a family experience. We are gifted for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7). We are part of the body of Christ. How we treat others reveals our true devotion to Christ. The oneness of God and mankind made in the image and likeness of God demands an appropriate response toward God and toward other humans (i.e., especially those of the household of faith).

▣ **“There is no other commandment greater than these”** This statement is so hard for legalistic (i.e., weak; cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13) believers to accept. With a total love for God and covenant brothers (and even the lost) there are no rules. Rules are to flow from a changed heart and mind; they do not produce godliness!

**12:32-33 “HE. . . HIM”** These pronouns refer to YHWH. Because of Exod. 20:7, most Jews would have been uncomfortable pronouncing the Covenant name of God.

▣ **“THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM”** This phrase does not deny the existence of other spiritual beings such as angels. This literally meant that no one was before or beside YHWH. He is a unique category (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39). This scribe is expressing YHWH’s uniqueness!

**12:33 “LOVE. . . is much more than all burnt offerings”** This scribe had great understanding about the relationship between faith and rituals (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-14; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8). This is not to depreciate temple ritual, but to assert that proper motive and faith are crucial (i.e., joining the priestly and prophetic insights).

**12:34 “You are not far from the kingdom of God”** This statement was another way that Jesus asserted the centrality of a positive and immediate faith response to Himself. The kingdom was available then (i.e., through faith in Jesus), not somewhere in the future. Although this man understood OT theology, he was not right with God without placing his faith in Christ. Correct theology does not assure salvation! Knowledge of the Bible does not assure salvation! The performance of religious ritual and liturgy does not assure salvation! Faith in Christ does!

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:35-37

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? <sup>36</sup>David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'" <sup>37</sup>David himself calls Him 'LORD'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

**12:35 “How is it that”** This chapter records a series of questions

1. from the Sanhedrin (11:27-12:12)
2. from the Pharisees and Herodians (12:13-17)
3. from the Sadducees (12:18-27)
4. from a scribe (12:28-34)
5. from Jesus (11:29-33, 35-37)

Now Jesus asks them a question as He did in 11:29-30. This question-and-answer method is characteristic of rabbinical Judaism.

▣ **“Christ is the son of David”** Read Matt. 12:23ff; 21:15; II Sam. 7:11-16 and compare it to Ps. 110:1. Jesus was trying to reach the religious leaders. He cared for them so He used their type of reasoning and exegesis. They had so much light, but were so blinded by tradition.

**12:36 “David himself said in the Holy Spirit”** This asserts the inspiration of Psalm 110 by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is divine truth (i.e., from the Spirit), but written in the language and culture of its original authors.

▣ **“THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD”** This is a quote from Ps. 110:1 from the Septuagint. In Hebrew the first “LORD” (i.e., translated in English by all capitals) is our English translation’s way of translating YHWH. This occurred because the Hebrews were very reluctant to use the covenant name for deity. Therefore, when one came to YHWH in a text to be read aloud, he substituted the Hebrew term *Adon*, which means “lord,” “husband,” “owner,” or “master.” In Greek this was translated by *kurios*. This distinction does not show up in the Greek text where *kurios* is translated both YHWH and *adon*.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

### A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
  - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High, BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
  - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
  - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
  - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God, BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
  - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
  - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
  - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
  - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
  - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
  - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
  - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
  - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
  - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
  - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
  - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
  - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21

- l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
  - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
  - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)
- B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
  2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
    - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
    - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
    - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
    - d. *El* – Num. 24:16
    - e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
  3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
    - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
    - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
    - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
    - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
  2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
  3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
  4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
  5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Psalm 104).
 

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.
  6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
  7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
    - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
    - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
    - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
  8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
    - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
    - b. This may refer to the angelic council, whom God meets with in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
    - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)
1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
  - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
  - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
  - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
  - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
  - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
  - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
  - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever-living, only- living One”
  - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
    - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:9; 104:35)
    - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
    - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
  - a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
  - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
  - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
  - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
  - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
  - f. *YHWH – Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
  - g. *YHWH – Ro’i* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
  - h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
  - i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

☐ **“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND”** The “My” refers to YHWH. This anthropomorphic phrase (i.e., speaking of God in human bodily terms) was meant to show the Messiah’s place of power, authority, and preeminence. This would reflect the King of the universe sharing His throne with another (i.e., His Messiah, cf. 14:62).

☐ **“UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET”** This continues the quote from Ps. 110:1. This phrase asserts YHWH’s victory on behalf of His Messiah (cf. Psalm 2). This truth is further revealed in I Cor. 15:24-27 and even carried on ultimately in the eternal kingdom of the Father in I Cor. 15:28!

Mark’s (and Matt. 22:44) quote of Ps. 110:1 deviates from the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Septuagint (as does Mark’s quote of Deut. 6:4-5 in vv. 29-30). The MT and the LXX have “until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet” (cf. Luke 20:43; Acts 2:34-35). The scribes (i.e., MSS  $\aleph$ , A, L, and the Vulgate and Peshitta translations) changed Mark’s quote to conform to the OT quote.



**12:37** This was the crux of the question. It shows that (1) the religious leaders did not understand (i.e., were spiritually blind to) the Scriptures, even about the Messiah or (2) Christ, though son of David, was spiritually superior to David and in fact, had a divine origin. As they had tried to trick Jesus with questions, so now He asked them a question that silenced them.

I think #2 is theologically the appropriate answer. YHWH of the OT chose the Messianic line apart from human effort or cultural traditions (i.e., all the Patriarchs married infertile women and never did the eldest son become the chosen line)! This is a subtle, but strong, affirmation that the Messiah will be greater than David (i.e., David's "lord" or "master"), which surely implies a divine act, even a divine person.

▣ **"And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him"** Large crowds are a recurrent characteristic of Mark's Gospel. The people of the land, who were often ridiculed and overlooked by the religious elite (cf. vv. 38-40), enjoyed seeing Jesus turn the tables on the arrogant religionists using their very method.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:38-40**

<sup>38</sup>In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, <sup>39</sup>and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, <sup>40</sup>who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

**12:38 "the scribes who like to"** The temporal connection between 12:25-27 and vv. 38-40 is uncertain. Obviously He is addressing the same category of leaders (i.e., scribes), but it is uncertain if the scribes of 35-37 are being addressed or other scribes who like to flaunt their religion. Surely Jesus' words also relate to the Sadducees and the Pharisees who put on a religious show in order to be recognized by the people.

▣ **"who like to walk around in long robes"** This refers to a distinctive white linen *tallith* with large blue tassels worn by the scribes. The Talmud taught that one is required to stand in the presence of a rabbi. These men liked this special treatment (i.e., distinctive prayer shawls, respectful greetings, best seats in worship, and place of honor at meals). They had it all, but missed Christ!

**12:40 "who devour widow's houses"** This may be metaphorical language referring to (1) the burden of almsgiving that these leaders required of all the people or (2) the practice of convincing widows to give their inheritance (i.e., livelihood) to the temple. This thereby refers to the manipulative fund-raising techniques of the religious leaders.

▣ **"for appearance's sake offer long prayers"** They prayed to be seen by others, not heard by God. Their religion was an outward show (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21-23; Col. 2:16-23), but they did not recognize God's greatest gift!

▣ **"they will receive greater condemnation"** Their religious faith was an outward show, not an active inner faith of love and service (cf. vv. 28-34). This phrase may reflect (1) degrees of punishment (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 18:6; 25:21,23; Luke 12:47-48; 20:47; James 3:1) or (2) Oriental metaphorical overstatement (i.e., hyperbole).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT**

- A. Appropriate and inappropriate response to God is based on knowledge. The less knowledge one has, the less responsible one is. The opposite is also true.
- B. Knowledge of God comes in two basic ways
  - 1. creation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1-2)
  - 2. Scripture (cf. Psalm 19, 119; the gospel)
- C. OT evidence
  - 1. rewards
    - a. Gen. 15:1 (usually associated with earthly reward, land and sons)
    - b. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant obedience brings blessing)
    - c. Dan. 12:3
  - 2. punishment
    - a. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant disobedience brings cursing)
  - 3. The OT pattern of reward for personal, covenantal righteousness is modified because of human sin. This modification is seen in Job and Psalm 73. The NT changes the focus from this world to the next (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).

D. NT evidence

1. rewards (beyond salvation)
  - a. Mark 9:41
  - b. Matt. 5:12,46; 6:1-4,5-6,6-18; 10:41-42; 16:27; 25:14-23
  - c. Luke 6:23,35; 19:11-19,25-26
2. punishment
  - a. Mark 12:38-40
  - b. Luke 10:12; 12:47-48; 19:20-24; 20:47
  - c. Matthew 5:22,29,30; 7:19; 10:15,28; 11:22-24; 13:49-50; 18:6; 25:14-30
  - d. James 3:1

- E. For me the only analogy that makes sense is from the opera. I do not attend opera presentations so I do not understand them. The more I knew of the difficulty and intricateness of the plot, music, and dance, the more I would appreciate the performance. I believe heaven will fill our cups, but I think our earthly service determines the size of the cup.

Therefore, knowledge and a response to that knowledge results in rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 16:7; I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,18; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14). There is a spiritual principle—we reap what we sow! Some sow more and reap more (cf. Matt. 13:8,23).

- F. “The crown of righteousness” is ours in the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:8), but notice that “the crown of life” is connected to perseverance under trial (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:10-11). The “crown of glory” for Christian leaders is connected to their lifestyle (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4). Paul knows he has an imperishable crown, but he exercises extreme self-control (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).

The mystery of the Christian life is that the gospel is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but as we must respond to God’s offer in Christ, we must also respond to God’s empowerment for Christian living. The Christian life is as supernatural as is salvation, yet we must receive it and hold on to it. The free-but-cost-everything paradox is the mystery of rewards and sowing/reaping.

We are not saved by good works, but for good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are the evidence that we have met Him (cf. Matthew 7). Human merit in the area of salvation leads to destruction, but godly living which results from salvation is rewarded.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12: 41-44**

<sup>41</sup>And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. <sup>43</sup>Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; <sup>44</sup>for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

**12:41 “the treasury”** The Mishnah (and Alfred Edersheim’s *Temple*, pp 48-49) says there were thirteen trumpet shaped chests, each marked for a specific charitable purpose, located in the Court of the Women. There has never been found any physical evidence of these nor any other literary confirmation beside the Mishnah of their existence.

**12:42 “two small copper coins”** This is literally “lepton” (the thin one), which was worth only a fraction (1/24 or 1/96) of a denarius. It was the least valuable Jewish copper coin.

▣ **“which amount to a cent”** This is the Latin term *quadrans*, which was equivalent to the *lepton*, the smallest Roman copper coin (1/4 of an *assarion*, which was itself 1/16 of a denarius). Mark was probably written to Romans.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: COINS IN USE IN PALESTINE IN JESUS' DAY

### I. Copper coins

- A. *cherma* – little value (cf. John 2:15)
- B. *chalchos* – little value (cf. Matt. 10:9; Mark 12:41)
- C. *assarion* – a Roman copper coin worth about 1/16 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Matt. 10:29)
- D. *kodrantes* – a Roman copper coin worth 1/64 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Matt. 5:26)
- E. *lepton* – a Jewish copper coin worth about 1/128 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2)
- C. *quadrans/farthing* – a Roman copper coin of little value

### II. Silver coins

- A. *arguros* (“silver coin”) – much more valuable than copper or bronze coins (cf. Matt. 10:9; 26:15)
- B. *dēnarius* – a Roman silver coin worth a day’s labor (cf. Matt. 18:28; Mark 6:37)
- C. *drachmē* – a Greek silver coin equivalent in value to a *dēnarius* (cf. Luke 15:9)
- D. *di-drachmon* – a double *drachmas* equaled a Jewish ½ shekel (cf. Matt. 17:24)
- E. *statēr* – a silver coin worth about four *dēnarii* (cf. Matt. 17:27)

### III. Gold coins – *chrysos* (“gold coins”) - most valuable coins (cf. Matt. 10:9)

### IV. General terms for weights of metals

- A. *minaa* – Latin *mina*, a weight of metal equivalent to 100 *dēnarii* (cf. Luke 19:13)
- B. *talanton* – a Greek unit of weight (cf. Matt. 18:24; 25:15,16,20,24,25,28)
  - 1. silver worth 6,000 *dēnarii*
  - 2. gold worth 180,000 *dēnarii*
- C. *sheqel* – Jewish OT weight of silver (cf. Gen. 23:15; 37:28; Exod. 21:32)
  - 1. *pām* – 2/3 shekel
  - 2. *beka* – ½ shekel
  - 3. *gerah* – 1/20 shekel

#### Larger units

- 1. *maneh* – 50 shekels
- 2. *kikkar* – 3,000 shekels

**12:43** “‘Truly’” This is literally “amen.” See Special Topic at 3:28.

**12:44** This woman’s complete faith is contrasted with the scribes’ religious pride and shallowness. They rip off widows’ resources. This widow gives all her resources to God and thereby depends on Him by faith to provide her needs. In giving, God looks at the heart, not the amount (cf. II Cor. 8-9). But also notice the amount was all she had. Giving, like deeds and words, reveals the heart! See Special Topic: Wealth at 10:23.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List what each of the following items stood for in the parable (12:1-12)
  - a. Owner of the Vineyard\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Vineyard\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Tenants\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Slaves\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Son\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is the partial quote of Psalm 118 so appropriate here (i.e., v. 10)?
3. What is the significance of the parable (i.e., vv. 1-12) to the Jewish nation (cf. Matt. 21:43-44)? Also examine Rom. 9-11 for a balancing statement.
4. Summarize the central truths of Christ's statements.
  - a. In regard to civil authorities (vv. 13-17)
  - b. In regard to resurrections (vv. 18-27)
  - c. In regard to the law (vv. 28-34)
  - d. In regard to the title "Son of David" (vv. 35-40)
  - e. In regard to giving and commitment (vv. 41-44)
5. Are there degrees of punishment (cf. v. 40)?

# MARK 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Destruction of the Temple Foretold	Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple	Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold	Jesus Speaks of the Destruction of the Temple	The Eschatological Discourse: Introduction
13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2
The Beginning of Woes	The Signs of the Times and the End of the Age	On the End of the Age	Troubles and Persecutions	
13:3-13	13:3-13	13:3-13	13:3-8	13:3-4
				The Beginning of Sorrows
				3:5-8
			13:9-13	13:9-10
				13:11-13
The Great Tribulation	The Great Tribulation		The Awful Horror	The Great Tribulation of Jerusalem
13:14-23	13:14-23	13:14-23	13:14-20	13:14-20
			13:21-23	13:21-23
The Coming of the Son of Man	The Coming of the Son of Man		The Coming of the Son of Man	The Coming of the Son of Man
13:24-27	13:24-27	13:24-27	13:24-27	13:24-27
The Lesson of the Fig Tree	The Parable of the Fig Tree		The Lesson of the Fig Tree	The Time of This Coming
13:28-31	13:28-31	13:28-31	13:28-31	13:28-31
The Unknown Day and Hour	No One Knows the Day or Hour		No One Knows the Day or Hour	
13:32-37	13:32-37	13:32-37	13:32-37	13:32
				Be On the Alert
				13:33-37

### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. New Testament eschatological passages reflect Old Testament prophetic insight that viewed the end-time through contemporary occurrences. Jesus follows this pattern. The OT prophets Micah and Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as a sign of God's judgment on unbelieving Israel. God would call Gentiles to judge His people and take over their land. Now in the NT God's people still act in unbelief. They reject His Messiah. They will be destroyed, along with their city and temple (i.e., A.D. 70 by Titus). Their promised land is now given to others (cf. 12:1-12, especially v. 9, i.e., apparently Gentile believers. The Gentile mission is described in 13:9-13).
- B. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are so difficult to interpret because they deal with several questions simultaneously.
  - 1. when will the temple be destroyed?
  - 2. what will be the sign of the Messiah's return?
  - 3. when will this age end?
- C. The genre of New Testament eschatology is usually a combination of apocalyptic and prophetic language, which is purposely ambiguous and highly symbolic.
- D. Several passages in the NT (cf. Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21, I and II Thess. and Rev.) deal with the Second Coming. These passages emphasize
  - 1. that the exact time of the event is unknown, but the event is certain
  - 2. that the last generation will know the general time, but not specific time, of the events
  - 3. that it will occur suddenly and unexpectedly
  - 4. that every generation of believers must be prayerful, ready, and faithful to assigned tasks
- E. The primary focus of this chapter is on practical advice (19 IMPERATIVES), not pinpointing the exact time or chronological sequence of the events of the Second Coming.
- F. The two key phrases are (1) "look out" (vv. 5,9,23,33) and (2) "not yet" (vv. 7,10). These twin foci of "be ready" and "wait patiently" are balanced with the other paradox of "the already" and "the not yet."

**CRUCIAL INTRODUCTION TO ESCHATOLOGY** Why do Christians Have So Many Dogmatic Interpretations of Revelation? (This is taken from Dr. Utley's commentary on Revelation, vol. 12, 1998.)

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the soteriological (the doctrine of salvation) mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an in-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several sources:

- 1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
  - 2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
  - 3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
  - 4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
  - 5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
  - 6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first
- Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

### **FIRST TENSION: The tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models.**

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but the NT Apostles never focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

- 1. OT prophets
- 2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12)
- 3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch)
- 4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
- 5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4; II Thess. 2)

6. the writings of John (the book of Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope.

1. The city of Jerusalem is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion) and is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 20-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the people of God is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:3) involved the Gentiles.
2. In the OT the enemies are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a cosmic conflict.
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Revelation 20-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are (1) the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); (2) the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:9; 2:23; Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45; II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; Titus 2:14); (3) the temple is now the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19); and (4) even Israel and its characteristic descriptive phrases now refer to the whole people of God (cf. Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6).

The prophetic model has been fulfilled and expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions, instead of the teachings of Jesus, in describing the end (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome.

## **SECOND TENSION: The tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people) .**

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God. The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-47), but by personal faith and obedience. Israel lost her mission, turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

## **THIRD TENSION: The tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption.**

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it, yes? God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). However, mankind is God's instrument of blessing! The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Gal. 3).

The world mission of redemption has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There is surely, but not exclusively, a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

#### **FOURTH TENSION: The tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models.**

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than the original author intended as it is to make it say less! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation. I am a dialectical (paradoxical) interpreter. My concern is for the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mindset presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. A historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment, or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed, in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms, God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the life of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess. 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) and Paul (cf. II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by J. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* says:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).



### **FIFTH TENSION: The tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future.**

The kingdom of God is both present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel.

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being present at Christ's first coming, then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come; the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Dan. 7) and the millennial reign of Christ (cf. Revelation 20). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah that they miss the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, so too, the temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

### **SIXTH TENSION: The tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.**

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30). But every generation so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He was coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) as if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

### **CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE**

The different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret some texts well. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary with some fear and trepidation, not because of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God's people. I love God's revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a "what if," not a "thus says the Lord." I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding "word" is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

(This special topic is taken from my commentary on Revelation.)

Revelation is a uniquely Jewish literary genre, apocalyptic. It was often used in tension-filled times to express the conviction that God was in control of history and would bring deliverance to His people. This type of literature is characterized by

1. a strong sense of the universal sovereignty of God (monotheism and determinism)
2. a struggle between good and evil, this age and the age to come (dualism)
3. use of secret code words (usually from the OT or intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic literature)
4. use of colors, numbers, animals, sometimes animals/humans
5. use of angelic mediation by means of visions and dreams, but usually through angelic mediation
6. primarily focuses on the end-time (new age)
7. use of a fixed set of symbols, not reality, to communicate the end-time message
8. Some examples of this type of genre are
  - a. Old Testament
    - (1) Isaiah 24-27, 56-66
    - (2) Ezekiel 37-48
    - (3) Daniel 7-12
    - (4) Joel 2:28-3:21
    - (5) Zechariah 1-6, 12-14
  - b. New Testament
    - (1) Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and I Corinthians 15 (in some ways)
    - (2) II Thessalonians 2 (in most ways)
    - (3) Revelation (chapters 4-22)
  - c. non-canonical (taken from D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pp. 37-38)
    - (1) I Enoch, II Enoch (the Secrets of Enoch)
    - (2) The Book of Jubilees
    - (3) The Sibylline Oracles III, IV, V
    - (4) The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
    - (5) The Psalms of Solomon
    - (6) The Assumption of Moses
    - (7) The Martyrdom of Isaiah
    - (8) The Apocalypse of Moses (Life of Adam and Eve)
    - (9) The Apocalypse of Abraham
    - (10) The Testament of Abraham
    - (11) II Esdras (IV Esdras)
    - (12) Baruch II, III
9. There is a sense of duality in this genre. It sees reality as a series of dualisms, contrasts, or tensions (so common in John's writings) between
  - a. heaven – earth
  - b. evil age (evil men and evil angels) – new age of righteousness (godly men and godly angels)
  - c. current existence – future existence

All of these are moving toward a consummation brought about by God. This is not the world God intended it to be, but He is continuing to play, work, and project His will for a restoration of the intimate fellowship begun in the Garden of Eden. The Christ event is the watershed of God's plan, but the two comings have brought about the current dualisms.

**POSSIBLE OUTLINE RELATED TO THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS** (taken from E. F. Bruce's *Answers to Questions*, p. 57)

- A. Warnings against being misled (13:5-8)
- B. Predictions of persecution (13:9-13)
- C. The destruction of Jerusalem (13:14-23)
- D. The return of Christ (13:24-27)
- E. Exhortations to be watchful in their contemporary situation which led to the destruction of Jerusalem (13:28-31, i.e., that generation v. 34)
- F. Exhortations to be watchful for the Lord's return (13:32-37; i.e., no one knows but the Father v. 36)
- G. F. F. Bruce makes Mark 13 parallel to first six seals of Revelation 6 (cf. p. 57 and 138)

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-2**

<sup>1</sup>As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" <sup>2</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

**13:1 "the temple"** This was the word (*hieron*) for the whole temple area. Jesus had been teaching there since the events of Mark 11 (cf. Matt. 26:55). These buildings had become the great Jewish hope, a symbol of God's exclusive love for Israel (cf. Jer. 7; John 8:31-59).

▣ **"one of His disciples"** It may have been Peter (cf. v. 3). John Mark may have given us Peter's memory of Jesus' words. This is the longest teaching session in Mark's Gospel.

▣ **"wonderful stones"** This is literally "huge stones." Josephus tells us Herod the Great used huge polished limestones or *mezzeh* that were native to this area. They were 25 x 8 x 12 cubits (cf. *Antiquities* 15.11.3). Stones of similar shape and material are still visible at the wailing wall in Jerusalem.

▣ **"wonderful buildings"** This is literally "huge buildings." They were white polished limestone with gold trim. This huge and expensive building project was meant to placate the Jews who were upset over an Idumean being king. This remodeling and expansion was begun in 20/19 B.C. and finished in about A.D. 63/64 (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 15.11.1-7; *Wars* 5.5.1-6).

**13:2 "Not one stone will be left upon another"** This phrase has two DOUBLE NEGATIVES with the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD. There is no stronger grammatical negation possible in the Greek language! This speaks of total destruction. This must have dumbfounded them! Josephus tells us that in A.D. 70 the Romans destroyed this site so completely that one could plow the ground as a field (cf. Mic. 3:12; Jer. 26:18).

There are some Greek manuscript variants related to this phrase. One follows the wording of Matt. 24:2 found in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, L, and W. The second follows the wording of Luke 21:6 found in MS A and the Vulgate. The UBS<sup>4</sup> follows Matt. 24:2, which adds the ADVERB "here" or "in this place."

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:3-8**

<sup>3</sup>As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, <sup>4</sup>"Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" <sup>5</sup>And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs."

**13:3 "sitting on the Mount of Olives"** This 2.5 mile ridge on the east overlooked (i.e., about 300-400 feet higher) Jerusalem and the temple area.

▣ **"Peter and James and John and Andrew"** Only Mark's Gospel mentions this detail. This is probably one of Peter's eyewitness memories.

**13:4 “when will these things be said, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled”** Matthew 24:3 records the expanded questions. There were several events that these disciples wanted to know about: (1) the time of the destruction of the temple; (2) the time of the Second Coming; and (3) the time of the end of the age. The disciples probably thought all three would happen at one time. Notice Jesus merges the temporal and the eschatological, just as the OT prophets did.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANSWERS TO THE DISCIPLES’ TWO QUESTIONS OF MATTHEW 24:3**

(by F. F. Bruce in *Answers to Questions*, p 57).

- A. A warning against being misled, by false prophets or great calamities, into thinking that this is the end
  - 1. Matt. 24:4-
  - 2. Mark 13:5-8
  - 3. Luke 21:8-11
- B. A prediction of persecution and promise of help
  - 1. Matt. 24:9-14
  - 2. Mark 13:9-13
  - 3. Luke 21:12-19
- C. An answer to the first question, relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of its inhabitants
  - 1. Matt. 24:15-28
  - 2. Mark 13:14-23
  - 3. Luke 21:20-24
- D. An answer to the second question, describing the coming of Christ
  - 1. Matt. 24:29-31
  - 2. Mark 13:24-27
  - 3. Luke 21:20-24
- E. An exhortation to watchfulness in the situation leading up to the fall of Jerusalem
  - 1. Matt. 24:32-35
  - 2. Mark 13:28-31
  - 3. Luke 21:29-33
- F. An exhortation to watchfulness for the coming of Christ
  - 1. Matt. 24:36-44
  - 2. Mark 13:32-37
  - 3. Luke 21:34-36

**13:5-13 “See to it that no one misleads you”** “See” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus commands them to be on constant alert. In some ways these Jewish traditions about the Messiah had already biased them. These verses mention false signs or precursor signs that are present in every age. This statement is repeated often (cf. vv. 5,9,23,33). There will be many who try to trick them on these issues.

Every generation of Christians has tried to force its contemporary history into biblical prophecy. To date they have all been wrong! Part of the problem is that believers are to live in a moment-by-moment expectation of the Second Coming, yet the prophecies are all written for one end-time generation of persecuted followers. Rejoice that you do not know!

**13:6 “Many will come in My name”** This refers to false Messiahs (cf. Matt. 24:11,23-24). There is even a reference in Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews* 6.54 which asserts that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem because of the fanaticism of the false prophets, who led the people astray with false promises of YHWH’s intervention in saving Jerusalem based on Isaiah’s prophecies (i.e., Isa. 37), but of course not mentioning Jeremiah’s repeated predictions of faithless Jerusalem’s fall.

▣ **“saying “I am He”**” This is literally “I am.” This was a Messianic designation using the title of the OT Covenant God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:12,14; John 4:26; 8:24,58; 13:19; 18:5). See Special Topic at 12:36.

▣ **“and will mislead many”** These types of warnings and terminology are common in apocalyptic literature. This shows the persuasive power of the false Messiahs and the spiritual vacuum of fallen humanity (cf. Matt. 24:11,23-26). It also shows the naivete of new believers and/or carnal Christians (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14).

**13:7 “do not be frightened”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act in progress.

▣ **“those things must take place; but that is not yet the end”** Wars and earthquakes are not signs of the end, but precursors/signs present in every age (cf. vv. 8,10; Matt. 24:6-8). These violent natural events are not signs of the Second Coming, but of life in a fallen world (cf. John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, pp. 25,28, which is a good presentation of the Preterist Interpretation).

**13:8 “there will also be famines”** Some Greek manuscripts add the phrase “and troubles” (cf. MSS A, W, and NKJV). There are several other variants, but most English translations have “and famines,” which is found in Matt. 24:7 and MSS N, B, and L (and MS D in a slightly different form). The parallel in Luke 21:11 has several other things listed. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter reading a “B” rating (almost certain).

▣ **“birth pangs”** The full idiom is “birth pangs” of the new age (cf. Isa. 13:8; 26:17; Jer. 30:6-7; Micah 4:9-10; Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8; Acts 2:24; I Thess. 5:3). This reflects the Jewish belief in the intensification of evil before the new age of righteousness (cf. vv. 19-20 and the *Book of Jubilees* 23:18 along with the *Apocalypse of Baruch* 27-29). The Jews believed in two ages: the current evil age, characterized by sin and rebellion against God, and the “age to come.” The New Age would be inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah (cf. Psalm 2). It would be a time of righteousness and fidelity to God. Although the Jewish view was partially true, it did not take into account the two comings of the Messiah. We live in the overlapping of these two ages: the “already” and “not yet” of the kingdom of God!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw it as a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism).

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age (Dan. 2:44-45). However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10), humble and meek (cf. Zechariah 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:9-13

<sup>9</sup>“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. <sup>10</sup>The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. <sup>11</sup>When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup>Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup>You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”

**13:9-13** This material is not paralleled in Matthew 24, but appears in Matt. 10:17-22. This shows that Jesus must have repeated these same truths on several occasions or that Matthew and Mark structured this material topically.

**13:9 “be on your guard”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (the same form as vv. 5 and 23). There is an element of personal responsibility involved in preparation for the persecution of the end-time events.

▣ **“courts. . .synagogues. . .before governors and kings”** “Courts and synagogues,” a phrase not found in Matt. 24:9, shows both governmental and religious persecution of Christians by both Jews and Gentiles (cf. I Pet. 4:12-16).

▣ **“the courts”** This is the PLURAL form of Sanhedrin. It refers to local synagogue courts (cf. II Cor. 11:24).

▣ **“flogged”** This is literally “beaten” or “skinned” (cf. II Cor. 11:24). Jews whipped offenders thirty-nine times—thirteen times on the front and twenty-six times on the back in accordance with Deut. 25:1-3.

**13:9,12 “for My sake”** Will believers be persecuted, not for their own wickedness or civil crimes, but simply because they are Christians (cf. Matt. 5:10-16; I Pet. 4:12-16)?

**13:10 “The gospel must first be preached to all the nations”** The term “must” is the Greek *dei*, which implies necessity. Jesus (or Peter or Mark, all of whom are inspired) was trying to show the disciples (1) their Gentile mission (cf. Gen. 12:3; I Kgs. 8:60; Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 52:10; 60:1-3; Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 11:25-27) and (2) that there would be an extended period of time between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming (cf. II Thessalonians 2; II Peter 2). We must hold in tension the any-moment return of our Lord and the truth that some things must happen first. There is a real tension in the New Testament concerning the time of the Second Coming: imminent, delayed, or unknown.

**13:11** The Spirit will always be with believers! The Spirit will empower believers amidst persecution (cf. Acts 4)! The Spirit is often identified with Jesus as the parallel in Luke 21:15 shows. This promise does not replace personal preparation for regular preaching and teaching opportunities; therefore, it is not a substitute for proper study. This is a special grace which allows believers to witness to faith in Christ in times of persecution (cf. Matt. 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12; 21:14-15).

▣ **“in that hour”** See Special Topic: Hour at 14:35.

**13:12 “brother. . .brother”** Family was the heart of Jewish life, but families will be split over Christ (cf. Matt. 10:21,35-37). This is also a recurrent theme in apocalyptic writings (cf. *Jubilees* 23:19 and *II Baruch* 70:3).

**13:13 “but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved”** This is the doctrine of perseverance (cf. Matt. 10:22). It must be held in a dialectical tension with the doctrine of security (cf. Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at 4:17.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:14-23**

<sup>14</sup>“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup>the one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; <sup>16</sup>and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. <sup>17</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>18</sup>But pray that it may not happen in the winter. <sup>19</sup>For those days will be a *time of tribulation* such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. <sup>20</sup>Unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. <sup>21</sup>And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe *him*; <sup>22</sup>for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. <sup>23</sup>But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”

**13:14**

NASB, NKJV

“the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION”

NRSV

“the desolating sacrilege”

TEV

“the Awful Horror”

JB

“the disastrous abomination”

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

M. R. Vincent describes well the term abomination: “The cognate verb, βδελύσσειν, means to feel a nausea or loathing for food, hence used of disgust generally. In a moral sense it denotes an object of moral or religious repugnance. See II Chron. 15:8; Jer. 13:27; Ezek. 11:21; Dan. 9:27; 11:31. It is used as equivalent to idol in I Kings 11:17; Deut. 7:26; 2 Kings 23:13. It denotes anything in which estrangement from God manifests itself; as the eating of unclean beasts, Lev. 11:11; Deut. 14:3; and, generally, all forms of heathenism. This moral sense must be emphasized in the New Testament use of the word. Compare Luke 16:15; Rev. 17:4,5; 21:27. It does not denote mere physical or esthetic disgust. The reference here is probably to the occupation of the temple precincts by the idolatrous Romans under Titus, with their standards and ensigns. Josephus says that after the burning of the temple the Romans brought their ensigns and set them over against the eastern gate, and there they offered sacrifices to them, and declared Titus, with acclamations, to be emperor” (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, pp. 74-75).

The word “desolation” meant sacrilege. This phrase is used in Dan. 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11.

1. It seems originally to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who put an altar to Zeus Olympios in the temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C. (cf. Dan. 8:9-14; I Macc. 1:54).
2. Also in Dan. 7:7-8 it related to the Antichrist of the end-time (cf. II Thess. 2:4).
3. In Luke 21:20 it possibly refers to the coming of the Roman General (later Emperor) Titus’ army in A.D. 70, who sacrificed to their army standards which were dedicated to pagan gods, placed by the eastern gate close to the temple. It cannot refer to the siege of Jerusalem itself because it would be too late for believers to escape.

This is an example of a phrase being used in several different, but related, senses. This is called multiple fulfillment prophecy. It is difficult to interpret until after the events occur; looking back, the typology is obvious.



**NASB** “standing where it should not be”  
**NKJV** “standing where it ought not”  
**NRSV, NJB** “set up where it ought not to be”  
**TEV** “standing in the place where he should not be”

The PARTICIPLE standing is PERFECT ACTIVE ACCUSATIVE MASCULINE in *The Analytical Greek New Testament* by Barbara and Timothy Friberg, p. 154 (cf. TEV), but PERFECT ACTIVE ACCUSATIVE NEUTER in *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* by William D. Mounce, p.219 (cf. NASB, NRSV, NJB). If NEUTER, then it refers to (1) “the abomination” (*bdelugma*) or (2) to Titus’ army (*strateuma*). Matthew 24:15 adds “standing in the Holy Place” (i.e., the Holy Place of the temple), which implies the MASCULINE gender and refers to the Roman General. This, too, fits Titus, who set up the Roman standards (which stood for their gods) in the temple in Jerusalem.

☐ “(let the reader understand)” This means “to think about carefully” or “to consider well” (cf. II Tim. 2:7). This is a comment from the author of the Gospel. It apparently was meant to trigger further discussion (i.e., the Abomination of Desolation from Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) on the subject by the person reading the text aloud to a study group in a worship setting, somewhat like our modern Sunday School classes.

☐ “those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains” Eusebius, a church historian from the fourth century, records that the Christians fled Jerusalem to Pella, about twenty miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, just before the Roman siege encircled the city in A.D. 70 (cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 3:5:2-3).

**13:15 “the one who is on the housetop”** The houses had flat roofs. They were used as the place of social gathering in the hot months. It has been said that one could walk across Jerusalem on the roofs of houses. Apparently some houses were built next to the city’s wall. When the army was seen, immediate flight was necessary.

**13:16 “coat”** This referred to the outer robe, which was also used as sleeping cover. Men working in the field would not have had this with them.

**13:17 “woe”** This term is used in the OT to designate judgment prophecies. It was a way of referring to a funeral dirge or lament. God’s judgment on Jerusalem would affect believers as well as unbelievers (as will the Great Tribulation).

☐ “to those who are pregnant” This obviously refers to the destruction of Jerusalem only. It would have been difficult for pregnant women to flee rapidly over the wall. This has nothing to do with the Second Coming! These disciples’ questions to Jesus relate to three separate issues: the destruction of Jerusalem, His Second Coming, and the end of the age. The problem is that these questions were dealt with at the same time. There is no easy verse division by topic.

**13:18 “in winter”** Rapid travel would have also been difficult in winter for pregnant women and little ones.

**13:19** This can be viewed as (1) the severity of the end-time persecution of believers and God’s judgment on unbelievers or (2) an Oriental hyperbole. It is hard to know whether references are literal or figurative (compare Joel 2:28-32 and Peter’s use of it in Acts 2, where it is not taken literally). The NT is an eastern book. They were much more accustomed to exaggerations and figures of speech than we are as modern westerners. It is never a question of taking the revelation seriously. It is a hermeneutical question of the intent of the original inspired author. To take the NT literally every time and in every place is not biblical conservatism, but improper interpretation.

This verse might be an allusion to Dan. 12:1, but with an added phrase. The elect are those whose names are in the book of life (i.e., believing Jews, the true remnant, and believing Gentiles, the mystery of God hidden, but now revealed, cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

▣ **“since the beginning of the creation”** See Special Topic at 10:6.

**13:20** The interpretive question is to which of the three events (i.e., (1) destruction of Jerusalem; (2) the Coming of Christ; or (3) the end of the age) does this refer? These three events are discussed in overlapping ways. There is no clear and precise verse division. It seems to me this refers to the Second Coming and the end of the age and not the destruction of Jerusalem, because the Christians fled the city before its destruction.

▣ **“Unless”** This is a rare SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE called “contrary to fact.” It states an incorrect premise which makes the conclusion incorrect. Literally this would imply “If the Lord had not shortened the days (which He did) no one would be saved (but they were).”

▣ **“the Lord”** This must refer to YHWH, not Jesus. YHWH is the One who elects/chooses (cf. Eph. 1:4).

▣ **“been saved”** This is the use of the term in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15), not spiritual salvation.

▣ **“but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose”** See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others’ redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths.

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God’s transcendence vs. God’s immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response



11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

▣ **“He shortened the days”** This phrase implies that the unchangeable God (cf. Ps. 102:26-27; Mal. 3:6) can alter His plans! His character and redemptive purposes never change, but the prayers of His people do affect Him and often alter His plans. This is mystery! But it is the essence of intercessory prayer.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus’ example
  1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
  2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
  3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4
- B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and others, through our prayers.
- C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2)
- D. The major purpose of prayer is our fellowship and time with the Triune God.
- E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.
- F. Prayer can involve several elements
  1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
  2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
  3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
  4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
  5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father
- G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

### **II. Biblical Material**

- A. Old Testament
  1. Some examples of intercessory prayer:
    - a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
    - b. Moses’ prayers for Israel
      - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
      - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
      - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
      - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
    - c. Samuel prays for Israel:
      - (1) I Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
      - (2) I Samuel 12:16-23
      - (3) I Samuel 15:11
    - d. David for his child, II Samuel 12:16-18
  2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
  3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers
    - a. Psalm 66:18
    - b. Proverbs 28:9
    - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7

B. New Testament

1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
  - a. Jesus
    - (1) Romans 8:34
    - (2) Hebrews 7:25
    - (3) I John 2:1
  - b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27
2. Paul's intercessory ministry
  - a. Prays for the Jews
    - (1) Romans 9:1ff
    - (2) Romans 10:1
  - b. Prays for the churches
    - (1) Romans 1:9
    - (2) Ephesians 1:16
    - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
    - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
    - (5) I Thessalonians 1:2-3
    - (6) II Thessalonians 1:11
    - (7) II Timothy 1:3
    - (8) Philemon, v. 4
  - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
    - (1) Romans 15:30
    - (2) II Corinthians 1:11
    - (3) Ephesians 6:19
    - (4) Colossians 4:3
    - (5) I Thessalonians 5:25
    - (6) II Thessalonians 3:1
3. The church's intercessory ministry
  - a. Pray for one another
    - (1) Ephesians 6:18
    - (2) I Timothy 2:1
    - (3) James 5:16
  - b. Prayer requested for special groups
    - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44
    - (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18
    - (3) rulers, I Timothy 2:2
    - (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
    - (5) backsliders, I John 5:16

III. Conditions for answered prayer

A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit

1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; I John 3:22; 5:14-15

B. Motives

1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14

3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3
- C. Other aspects
  1. Perseverance
    - a. Luke 18:1-8
    - b. Colossians 4:2
  2. Kept on asking
    - a. Matthew 7:7-8
    - b. Luke 11:5-13
    - c. James 1:5
  3. Discord at home, I Peter 3:7
  4. Free from known sin
    - a. Psalm 66:18
    - b. Proverbs 28:9
    - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
    - d. Isaiah 64:7

#### IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege. What an opportunity. What a duty and responsibility.
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: FORTY-TWO MONTHS

The number forty-two months is prophetically characteristic of a period of persecution. The trampling of the outer court is a proverb for the people of God under the domination of unbelievers in different periods in history—Antiochus Epiphanes, the Romans in A.D. 70, and the end-time Antichrist.

Forty-two months, or its equivalent, is mentioned several times in the Bible. The origin seems to be the book of Daniel.

1. Daniel 7:25; 12:7 mention “a time, times, and half a time” or 1277 days (assuming a “time” equals one year)
2. Daniel 8:14 mentions 2300 evenings and mornings
3. Daniel 12:11 mentions 1290 days
4. Daniel 12:12 mentions 1335 days. Similar phrasing is found in Rev. 12:6 (1260 days) and 13:5 (42 months).

When all of these occurrences are taken into account, their variety seems to speak of the symbolic nature of the numbers, while their proximity to forty-two months seems to show that it is a symbolic number for a period of persecution. Since three and a half is half of seven, it seems to be a reference to a complete period of persecution that has been cut short (cf. Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:20; Luke 21:24). Persecution is limited in God’s love as is judgment.

**13:21 “if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action.

☐ **“do not believe Him”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process, but in this context it could not have this normal implication.

Christians need to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves (cf. Matt. 10:16). Naive Christians, gullible Christians, baby Christians are all too common. We must test the spirits (cf. I John 4:1) to see if they are truly God’s spokespersons. It is so sad to me when I hear of believers flocking to trees, screen doors, or special holy sites to see Jesus. This context is very clear! When He comes all will see Him and know Him (cf. Matt. 24:27).

The immediate context of vv. 14-23 refers to those escaping from Jerusalem, not to be deterred by someone claiming Christ had appeared in the city, in this place, or that.

**13:22 “will show signs and wonders”** These false christs will perform miracles. Be careful of always identifying the miraculous with God (cf. Exod. 7:11-12,22; Deut. 13:1ff; Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-14). False believers can do miracles (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

▣ **“if possible”** It seems to me that the contingency of v. 22 may be contextually related to the contingency of v. 20 (i.e., a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL) because the elect (cf. vv. 20 and 22) cannot be led astray!

**13:23** This was one of Jesus’ ways (which reflect YHWH’s predictions in the OT) of proving to His followers His control of history and redemption by foretelling upcoming events. YHWH and His Christ control time and history! Even hard times are part of His overarching redemptive plan.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:24-27**

<sup>24</sup>**“But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, <sup>25</sup>AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup>Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.”**

**13:24 “But”** This is a strong ADVERSATIVE that shows a break in context. A new time segment is being revealed.

**13:24 “THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED”** This is the OT apocalyptic language of the end-time (cf. Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; 3:15; 28:3-4; Amos 8:9; also see II Esdras 5:5; Assumption of Moses 10:5; and I Enoch 80:4-7). This is a series of OT quotes:

1. v. 24 is from Isa. 13:10
2. v. 25 is from Isa. 34:3
3. v. 26 is from Dan. 7:13

Yet this may refer to upheavals in nature as the Creator approaches (cf. II Pet. 3:7,10,11,12; Rom. 8:18-22). Often these apocalyptic cosmic events are used to describe the fall of governments.

**13:25** This is a quote from Isa. 34:4. It reflects the belief that stars are heavenly powers (cf. Jdgs. 5:20; Job 38:7). In apocalyptic literature falling stars often refer to angels (cf. Rev. 8:10; 9:1; 12:4). In the Bible angels are God’s servants, but in Mesopotamian idolatry they refer to gods who control human destiny (i.e., twelve signs of the Zodiac or planet movements).

**13:26 “THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS”** Jesus’ humanity and deity are emphasized by the term “Son of Man” as it is used in Ps. 8:4; in its regular Jewish idiomatic sense as human being in Ezek. 2:1; and in its divine sense in Dan. 7:13 (cf. Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62 all use Dan. 7:13). The fact that this “Son of Man” rides on the clouds of heaven shows His deity (cf. Ps. 68:4; 104:3). The clouds are the transportation and covering of YHWH (the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory during the wilderness wandering period of Exodus and Numbers. Jesus leaves on a cloud [cf. Acts 1:9] and returns on the clouds [cf. I Thess. 4:17]).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING IN THE CLOUDS**

This phrase is an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Christ. This coming on the clouds was a very significant eschatological sign. It was used in three distinct ways in the OT:

1. to show God’s physical presence, the *Shekinah* cloud of Glory (cf. Exod. 13:21; 16:10; Num. 11:25)
2. to cover His Holiness so that man would not see Him and die (cf. Exod. 33:20; Isa. 6:5)
3. to transport Deity (cf. Isa. 19:1)

In Daniel 7:13 clouds were used of the transportation of a Divine human Messiah. This prophecy in Daniel is alluded to over 30 times in the NT. This same connection of the Messiah with the clouds of heaven can be seen in Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 14:62; Acts 1:9,11 and I Thess. 4:17.

▣ **“great power and glory”** This shows the drastic contrast between His first coming (cf. Zech. 9:9; Isa. 53) and the Second Coming (cf. Rev. 19). This is paralleled, but in different terms, in Matt. 24:30.

**13:27 “the angels”** In II Thess. 1:7 the angels are called Jesus’ angels. Usually they are called YHWH’s angels (cf. Jude 14).

▣ **“gather together His elect”** This is OT prophetic language (cf. Deut. 30:35; Isa. 43:6; and Ps. 50:5). The exact order of these specific end-time events is uncertain. Paul taught that at death the believer is already with Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). I Thess. 4:13-18 teaches that apparently something of our physical bodies, which were left here, will be united with our spirits at the Lord’s coming. This implies a disembodied state between death and resurrection day. There is so much about the end-time events and afterlife experience that is not recorded in the Bible.

▣ **“from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven”** This implies a world-wide following of Jesus! It also implies a long period of time for the gospel to spread.

The number four in the Bible is symbolic of the world. It referred to the four corners of the world (Isa. 11:12), the four winds of heaven (Dan. 7:2; Zech. 2:6), and the four ends of heaven (Jer. 49:36). The elect will be gathered from wherever they are scattered.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE**

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
  1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
  2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
  3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
  4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
    - a. seven candlesticks, 1:12,20; 2:1
    - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
    - c. seven churches, 1:20
    - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
    - e. seven lamps, 4:5
    - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
    - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
    - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
    - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
    - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
    - k. seven thousand, 11:13
    - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
    - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
    - n. seven bowls, 15:7
    - o. seven kings, 17:10
    - p. seven vials, 21:9
  5. Ten – completeness
    - a. use in Gospels
      - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
      - (2) Mark 10:41
      - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
    - b. use in Revelation
      - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
      - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
      - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
    - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
      - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
      - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
  6. Twelve – human organization
    - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
    - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
    - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
    - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
    - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
    - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
    - g. use in Revelation
      - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
      - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
      - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12

- (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
- (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
- (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
- (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 7. Forty – number for time
  - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
  - b. can be literal or symbolic
    - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
    - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
    - (3) divisions of Moses life:
      - (a) forty years in Egypt
      - (b) forty years in the desert
      - (c) forty years leading Israel
    - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
  - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 8. Seventy – round number for people
  - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
  - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
  - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
  - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
  - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
  - 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
  - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:28-32

<sup>28</sup>"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right at the door*. <sup>30</sup>Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. <sup>32</sup>But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*."

**13:28 “the fig tree”** In this parable the fig tree is apparently not a symbol of national Israel as in Mark 11:12-14, but a metaphor of believers knowing the general season, if not the specific time, of the Lord’s return. The fig tree was a late bloomer. It signaled the coming of summer, not spring.

**13:29 “recognize”** This is either a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE or a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The last generation will understand exactly these prophetic passages. The church’s problem is that every generation of believers has tried to force the prophecies into its own contemporary history and culture. So far every generation has been wrong. The church loses her credibility by all of these false predictions!

▣ **“He”** There is no PRONOUN in the Greek text. The “to be” verb can be MASCULINE or NEUTER. Because of v. 14, the NEUTER “it” fits best. If so, then this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

**13:30** This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE grammatical construction. It could refer to

- 1. the destruction of Jerusalem
- 2. the transfiguration (cf. 9:1)
- 3. the signs of the Second Coming

The problem is that Jesus merges all three questions (cf. Matt. 24:3) the disciples asked into one context, with no clean division between events.

**13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away”** This great truth is couched in OT apocalyptic language (cf. II Pet. 3:7,10). God’s Word will never pass away, but the physical creation which has been affected by human sin will be cleansed. This is the recurrent theme of Scripture (cf. Josh. 21:45; 23:14-15; I Kgs. 8:56; Isa. 40:6-8; 55:8-11; Matt. 5:17-20).

**13:32 “that day”** This is an abbreviation of the OT phrase “the Day of the Lord” (so common in Amos and Joel). It refers to the Second Coming or a judgment day (i.e., temporal= destruction of Jerusalem or eschatological = the last judgment).

▣ **“or hour”** See Special Topic: Hour at 14:35.

▣ **“no one knows. . .but the Father alone”** This refers to the Second Coming and the New Age, not the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus specifically addressed that generation in v. 30. This is a strong verse to deter Christians from setting specific dates for the Second Coming.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER**

The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father:

1. the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH’s “son” (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17)
2. even earlier in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as Father is used (1:31)
3. in Deut. 32 Israel is called “his children” and God is called “your father”
4. this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans)
5. it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9).

Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where “Father” appears as the Greek *Pater* may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. 14:36). This familial term “Daddy” or “Papa” reflects Jesus’ intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term “Father” was used sparingly in the OT for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of believers’ new relationship with God through Christ (cf. Matthew 6:9).

▣ **“not even the angels in heaven”** The angels are viewed as curious about God’s dealing with humanity (cf. I Cor. 4:9; Eph. 2:7; 3:10; I Pet. 3:12). Even though they are present with God, they do not fully understand His plans. In Christ these eternal purposes are made evident!

▣ **“nor the Son”** This lack of information clearly shows Jesus’ true humanity. Jesus, though fully man and fully God, left part of His divine attributes in heaven when He was incarnated (cf. Phil. 2:7). The limitation was only in affect until after the ascension.

Jesus’ use of the term “Son” to describe Himself reveals His self-understanding (i.e., YHWH is the Father, He is the chosen, Messianic Son). This is a rare usage of the term “Son” implying “Son of the Father” (i.e., God). Jesus often referred to Himself as “Son of Man,” but this phrase would have been understood by His hearers as “human person” unless they were familiar with its specialized use in Dan. 7:13. But, Judaism did not emphasize this OT text and title.

The phrase “nor the Son” is not included in Matt. 24:36 nor in some ancient Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph^a$ , K, L, W. It is included in most translations because it does occur in manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B and D, the Diatesseron, and the Greek texts known to Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, and the old Latin manuscript used by Jerome. This may have been one of the texts modified by orthodox scribes to accentuate the deity of Christ against false teachers (See Bart D. Ehrman’s *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 91-92).

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:33-37**

<sup>33</sup>“Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come. <sup>34</sup>*It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the morning— <sup>36</sup>in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup>What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”*

**13:33 “Take heed, keep on the alert”** These are PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES (cf. vv. 5,9,23). Believers are to live in the constant hope of the Second Coming. In vv. 33-37 there are two different Greek terms translated “watch”:

1. *blepō* (verse 33, cf. Gal. 6:1)
2. *grēgoreō* (verses 34,35,37, cf. Eph. 6:18)

In Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 333, these words have a semantic overlap of "stay awake" or "stay alert" for #1 and "be aware of" or "watch out for" for #2.

Although the reality of the Second Coming will only be the experience of one generation, each generation lives in the constant hope of the any-moment return of the Lord. This explains why the Apostles and the early church thought the return was imminent. The 2000 year delay is surprising, but God is longsuffering and wishes that none should perish (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). He tarries so that the church may fulfill the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8) and that the full number of believing Jews and believing Gentiles shall be gathered in (cf. Rom. 11). The return is wonderful for believers, but a disaster of eternal consequences for unbelievers.

▣ **["and pray"]** These words are present in many ancient Greek uncial manuscripts, including  $\aleph$ , A, C, K, L, W, X, but are missing in B and D. They very well might be original (cf. NKJV). The UBS<sup>4</sup>, however, gives the shorter reading a "B" rating (almost certain).

▣ **["the appointed time"]** This is not the term for chronological time *chronos*, which is not used in Mark, but the term for a special appointed time (*kairos*, cf. 1:15). This refers to a major eschatological event. The question is which one: (1) the destruction of Jerusalem; (2) the appearing of the Son of Man; or (3) the beginning of the New Age? Number one occurred in A.D. 70. Number two, in one sense, has already occurred (i.e., the incarnation and life of Jesus), but in another sense, is future (i.e., the consummation of the Kingdom of God at Jesus' Second Coming). Number three, like number two, has in some sense already occurred. Believers live in the already – not yet of the New Age, the Kingdom of God (cf. Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

**13:34 "like a man away on a journey"** This is common terminology for many of Jesus' parabolic teachings (cf. 12:1; Matt. 21:33; 25:14; Luke 15:13; 19:12; 20:9). The issue is the time factor (cf. vv. 35-37). Given enough time, the true nature of people comes out. The delayed return causes people's true loyalties and priorities to manifest themselves. Matthew's Gospel expands these words in Matt. 24:42-51.

▣ **["assigning to each one his task"]** This possibly relates to the gifts of the Spirit, listed in Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; and Eph. 4. Christians will be judged (cf. II Cor. 5:10), but for what? Surely not for sins, because Jesus' blood forgives all sin (cf. Heb. 9). Possibly Christians will give an account to God for the stewardship of the gospel and the use of their spiritual gift.

### 13:35

NASB	<b>"whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the morning"</b>
NKJV	<b>"in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning"</b>
NRSV	<b>"in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn"</b>
TEV	<b>"in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or at sunrise"</b>
NJB	<b>"evening, midnight, cockcrow or dawn"</b>

This wording reflects the four Roman night watches of three hours each:

1. evening, 6 - 9 p.m.
2. midnight, 9 p.m. - midnight
3. cockcrow, 12:00 a.m.- 3 a.m.
4. dawn, 3 - 6 a.m.

**13:37** See note at v. 33.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the basic purpose of this chapter?
2. Do verses 4-7 describe the end time?
3. How is Daniel's prophecy of chapters 7-12 related to the Second Coming?
4. Why does Jesus use apocalyptic language like verse 24?
5. Can believers know when the Lord will come again?
6. Is the Second Coming: imminent, delayed, or time uncertain?
7. How could Jesus not know the time of His return?
8. Do you expect Jesus' return in your lifetime?

# MARK 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Plot to Kill Jesus	The Plot to Kill Jesus	Jesus' Death  (14:1-15:47)	The Plot Against Jesus	The Conspiracy Against Jesus
14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2
The Anointing at Bethany	The Anointing at Bethany		Jesus Is Anointed At Bethany	The Anointing at Bethany
14:3-9	14:3-9	14:3-9	14:3-5 14:6-9	14:3-9
Judas' Agreement to Betray Jesus	Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus		Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus	Judas Betrays Jesus
14:10-11	14:10-11	14:10-11	14:10-11	14:10-11
The Passover with the Disciples	Jesus Celebrates the Passover with His Disciples	The Last Supper	Jesus Eats the Passover Meal with His Disciples	Preparations for the Passover Supper
14:12-21	14:12-21	14:12-16  14:17-21	14:12 14:13-15 14:16 14:17-18 14:;19 14:20-21	14:12-16  The Treachery of Judas Foretold 14:17-21
The Institution of the Lord's Supper	Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper		The Lord's Supper	The Institution of the Eucharist
14:22-26	14:22-26	14:22-25 Gethsemane 14:26-31	14:22 14:23-25 14:26	14:22-25 Peter's Denial Foretold 14:26-31
Peter's Denial Foretold	Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial		Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial	
14:27-31	14:27-31		14:27-28 14:29 14:30 14:31a 14:31b	
The Prayer in Gethsemane	The Prayer in Gethsemane		Jesus Prays in Gethsemane	Gethsemane
14:32-42	14:32-42	14:32-42	14:32-34 14:35-36 14:37-38	14:32-42

			14:39-40	
			14:41-42	
The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane		The Arrest of Jesus	The Arrest
14:43-50	14:43-50	14:43-50	14:43-44	14:43-52
			14:45-49	
The Young Man Who Fleed	A Young Man Flees Naked		14:50	
14:51-52	14:51-52	14:51-52	14:51-52	
Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin	Jesus Before Caiaphas	Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Before the Sanhedrin
14:53-65	14:53-65	14:53-65	14:53-56	14:53-54
				14:55-64
			14:57-59	
			14:60	
			14:61	
			14:62	
			14:63-64a	
			14:64b	
			14:65	14:65
Peter's Denial of Jesus	Peter Denies Jesus, and Weeps		Peter Denies Jesus	Peter's Denial
14:66-72	14:66-72	14:66-72	14:66-67	14:66-72
			14:68	
			14:69-70a	
			14:70b	
			14:71	
			14:72	

**READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v)**  
***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## SYNOPTIC GOSPEL PARALLELS

- A. The plot to kill Jesus in Mark 14:1-2 is paralleled in Matt. 16:1-5 and Luke 22:1-2.
- B. The anointing at Bethany in Mark 14:3-9 is paralleled in Matt. 16:6-13 and John 12:2-8 (possibly another anointing in Galilee in Luke 7:36-39).
- C. Judas' agreement to betray Jesus in Mark 14:10-11 is paralleled in Matt. 26:14-16 and Luke 22:3-6.
- D. The Passover with the disciples in Mark 14:12-21 is paralleled in Matt. 26:17-25, Luke 22:21-23, and John 13:21-30.
- E. The institution of the Lord's Supper in Mark 14:22-26 is paralleled in Matt. 26:26-29 and Luke 22:17-20 (cf. I Cor. 11:23-26).
- F. Peter's denial foretold in Mark 14:27-31 is paralleled in Matt. 26:31-35.
- G. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane in Mark 14:32-42 is paralleled in Matt. 26:36-46, Luke 22:39-40, and John 18:1.
- H. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus in Mark 14:43-50 is paralleled in Matt. 26:47-56, Luke 22:47-53, and John 18:2-12.
- I. Jesus before the Sanhedrin in Mark 14:53-65 is paralleled in Matt. 26:57-68 and John 18:12,19-24.
- J. Peter's denial of Jesus in Mark 14:66-72 is paralleled in Matt. 26:69-75, Luke 22:54-62, and John 18:15-18,25-27.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him; <sup>2</sup>for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people."

**14:1 "the Passover and Unleavened Bread"** Originally these were two separate feasts commemorating the same event, the last plague that caused Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt. The requirements for the Passover meal are found in Exod. 12:1-14,21-28,43-51. The procedures for the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread are found in Exod. 12:8,15-20 (cf. Num. 28:16-25, Deut. 16:1-8, and Josephus' *Antiquities* 3.10.5).

▣ **"two days away"** Because there were two feasts combined, the Jews sometimes referred to the whole period as "the Passover." Therefore, it is uncertain whether the "two days" means (1) two days before the eight-day feast or (2) two days before the Passover itself.

John 12:1-8 states this occurred on a different day; verses 3ff may be a flashback. The chronology of the last days of Jesus' life are recorded differently by the four Gospel writers. In my opinion the early church realized the discrepancies among the four Gospels, but did not try to reconcile them. The differences are caused by (1) the eyewitness nature of the writings and (2) the theological/evangelistic purposes of each individual writer. They each had the freedom (under inspiration) to select, adapt, and arrange Jesus' teachings and actions to fit their purposes and target groups (cf. Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 126-129).

▣ **"priests and the scribes"** Matthew adds "elders," which is the full designation for the Sanhedrin. See Special Topic at 12:13.

▣ **"to seize Him by stealth and kill Him"** This was nothing new (cf. 3:6; 11:18), but Jesus' actions in accepting the crowd's affirmations during the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the merchants from the Court of the Gentiles sealed His fate with both the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

**14:2 "there might be a riot of the people"** Jesus was very popular in Galilee. During the Passover Jerusalem grew to three times her normal population with pilgrims from all over the Mediterranean area, many of whom were from Galilee. The possible "riot" is mentioned in Matt. 26:5 and 27:24.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:3-9

<sup>3</sup>While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. <sup>4</sup>But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? <sup>5</sup>For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. <sup>9</sup>Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

**14:3 “Bethany”** A city on the ridge known as the Mt. of Olives, not far from Jerusalem, was a popular place for pilgrims to sleep during the three annual mandatory feasts. Every Jewish family who lived close to Jerusalem was culturally obligated to open their homes to pilgrims.

▣ **“Simon the leper”** In the OT leprosy was a sign of God’s displeasure. It had terrible social ramifications. This man had apparently been cured, possibly by Jesus. Leprosy in the ancient world incorporated many different kinds of skin diseases (cf. Leviticus 13-14), not just our modern leprosy.

The parallel in John 12:2-8 implies that this was the home of Lazarus and that Mary, his sister, was the woman. Could it be that Simon was their father whom Jesus had previously healed?

▣ **“reclining at the table”** They did not use chairs, but reclined at three low tables forming a horseshoe-shape, on their left elbow with their feet behind them.

▣ **“came a woman”** Luke 7:36-50 records a very similar anointing experience in the same place, but by a sinful woman. John 12:3 names this woman as Mary, Lazarus’ sister, but Mark gives no name. Mark, writing so early, possibly was afraid to identify her as a follower of Jesus, while John, writing much later, felt free to name her (cf. Lenski’s *St. Mark’s Gospel*).

This is surely a wonderful loving act which symbolized Jesus’ soon to be burial.



**NASB** “an alabaster vial”

**NKJV** “alabaster flask”

**NRSV, TEV, NJB** “alabaster jar”

This was a sealed container of white opaque stone from Alabastron, a city in Egypt. Once opened it could not be resealed. John 12:3 tells us it contained a whole pound. This could have been her marriage dowry. It was obviously an act of extravagant love and devotion.

**14:3**

**NASB** “costly perfume of pure nard”

**NKJV** “very costly oil of spikenard”

**NRSV** “very costly ointment of nard”

**TEV** “very expensive perfume made of pure nard”

**NJB** “very costly ointment, pure nard”

Nard was made from the root of a Himalayan plant. It had a very strong fragrance. The word “pure” is from *pistikos*, which implies a trustworthy quality (i.e., “genuine” or “unmixed,” cf. John 12:3).

The term “nard” is probably from Latin (cf. A. T. Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament* vol. 1 p. 380). Mark’s Gospel has more Latin words and phrases than any other Gospel. Apparently it is targeted to Romans.

▣ **“over His head”** John’s Gospel tells us the nard was poured on His feet (cf. John 12:3). Probably both are true because a whole pound would have been too much for just His head, but would easily anoint His whole body.

It is possible that being anointed on the head would have reminded these Jews of the anointing of a King (cf. I Sam. 10:1; II Kgs. 9:3,6 and implied in I Sam. 16:13). This may be a royal Messianic symbol as well as a burial procedure/prophecy (cf. 15:46; 16:1; Luke 23:56; John 19:39-40).

**14:4 “some”** John 12:4-5 identifies the questioner as Judas Iscariot. Apparently Jesus’s disciples were discussing this among themselves (cf. 9:10; 10:26; 11:31; 12:7; 16:3).

▣ **“were indignantly remarking to one another”** This is an IMPERFECT PERIPHRASTIC. The disciples were talking among themselves and deploring the woman’s extravagance. They were angry, even indignant. This term is used of Jesus’ attitude in 10:14 about the disciples keeping the children away.

▣ **“might have been sold for over three hundred denarii”** Modern monetary equivalents are not helpful because of the changing purchasing power of money. A denarius was the daily wage of a soldier or laborer; therefore, this was almost a year’s wage.

**14:5 “the money given to the poor”** Giving money to the poor during Passover was an important religious requirement of the rabbis (cf. John 13:29). It was called almsgiving.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING

- I. The term itself
  - A. This term developed within Judaism (i.e., the Septuagint period).
  - B. It refers to giving to the poor and/or needy
  - C. The English word, almsgiving, comes from a contraction of the Greek term *eleēmosunē*.
- II. Old Testament concept
  - A. The concept of helping the poor was expressed early in the Torah
    1. typical context, Deut. 15:7-11
    2. “gleaning,” leaving part of the harvest for the poor, Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 24:20
    3. “sabbath year,” allowing the poor to eat the produce of the seventh, fallow year, Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7.
  - B. The concept was developed in Wisdom Literature (selected examples)
    1. Job 5:8-16; 29:12-17 (the wicked described in 24:1-12)
    2. the Psalms, 11:7
    3. Proverbs 11:4; 14:21,31; 16:6; 21:3,13
- III. Development in Judaism
  - A. The first division of the Mishnah deals with how to treat the poor, needy, and local Levites.
  - B. Selected quotes
    1. Ecclesiasticus (also known as the Wisdom of Ben Sirach) 3:30, “as water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin” (NRSV)
    2. Ecclesiasticus 29:12, “store up almsgiving in your treasury and it will rescue you from every disaster” (NRSV)
    3. Tobit 4:6-11, “for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness<sup>b</sup> give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. <sup>8</sup>If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. <sup>9</sup>So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. <sup>10</sup>For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. <sup>11</sup>Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.” (NRSV)
    4. Tobit 12:8-9, “<sup>8</sup>Prayer and fasting<sup>d</sup> is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing<sup>e</sup>. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. <sup>9</sup>For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life.” (NRSV)
  - C. The last quote from Tobit 12:8-9 shows the problem developing. Human actions/human merits were seen as the mechanism for both forgiveness and abundance.

This concept developed further in the Septuagint where the Greek term for “almsgiving” (*eleēmosunē*) became a synonym for “righteousness” (*dikaïosunē*). They could be substituted for each other in translating the Hebrew “righteousness” (BDB 842, God’s covenant love and loyalty, cf. Deut. 6:25; 24:13; Isa. 1:27; 28:17; 59:16; Dan. 4:27).
  - D. Human acts of compassion became a goal in themselves to achieve one’s personal abundance here and salvation at death. The act itself, instead of the motive behind the act, became theologically preeminent. God looks at the heart, then judges the work of the hand. This was the teaching of the rabbis, but it somehow got lost in individual self-righteousness (cf. Micah 6:8).
- IV. New Testament reaction
  - A. The term is found in
    1. Matt. 6:1-4
    2. Luke 11:41; 12:33
    3. Acts 3:2-3,10; 10:2,4,31; 24:17
  - B. Jesus addresses the traditional understanding of righteousness as (cf. II Clement 16:4)
    1. almsgiving

- 2. fasting
- 3. prayer
- C. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Some Jews were trusting in their actions. These actions are meant to flow out of a love for God, His word and covenant brothers and sisters, not self-interest or self-righteousness! Humility and secrecy become guidelines for proper actions. The heart is crucial. The heart is desperately wicked. God must change the heart. The new heart emulates God!

**14:6 “Let her alone”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus defends this loving, gracious act. He saw it as a prophetic act of preparation for His rapidly approaching death and burial (cf. v. 8).

**14:7 “For you always have the poor with you”** This is not a disparaging comment about the poor (cf. Deut. 15:4,11), but an emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus and His special time on earth.

**14:8 “she has anointed My body beforehand”** Could she have understood what the disciples did not? The same type of perfume was used in burial preparations (cf. John 19:40).

**14:9 “Truly”** This is literally “amen.” See Special Topic at 3:28.

▣ **“whenever the gospel is preached”** The gospel refers to the message that Jesus taught about God, about humanity, about sin, about Himself, about salvation, and about the afterlife. Jesus revealed these truths to the inspired writers of the NT through the mediation of the Spirit. They are revelatory, not human discovery. It is primarily the revelation of a person and a relationship with that person, not only a creed or a system of doctrines about that person. It involves a personal relationship with Christ by faith and understanding of who He is and why He came, which leads to Christlike living in light of this new relationship with God and a totally new world view.

▣ **“in the whole world”** Jesus expected the gospel to permeate the entire globe (cf. 13:27 and Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her”** Jesus does not forget acts of kindness and devotion. This one is recorded in Scripture, but many others are kept in the heart of God and will be revealed on that great day (cf. Gal. 6:7-9; I Tim. 5:25; Rev. 14:13; also 2:1,19; 3:8).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:10-11**

<sup>10</sup>Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. <sup>11</sup>They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

**14:10 “Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve”** There are several theories concerning Iscariot (the word is spelled differently in various Greek manuscripts). It could refer to

- 1. a man of Kerioth, a city of Judah
- 2. man of Kartam, a city of Galilee
- 3. the bag used to carry money
- 4. the Hebrew word for “strangling”
- 5. the Greek word for assassin’s knife

If #1 is true he was the only Judean in the Twelve. If #4 or #5 is true he was a zealot like Simon.

There has recently been released an interesting, but highly speculative (depreciates John’s Gospel), book that interprets Judas in a positive light. The book is entitled *Judas, Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996.

▣ **“who was one of the twelve”** He was a member of Jesus’ hand-picked disciples. He was part of the mission trips and present at Jesus’ teaching sessions, miracles, and the Last Supper.

This phrase has the DEFINITIVE ARTICLE “the one.” There have been several suggestions as to the meaning of this: (1) Judas was a leader of the Apostolic group. He kept the money for the group and he had the seat of honor at the Last Supper or (2) it refers to the murmuring in v. 4.

▣ **“went off to the chief priests”** Luke 22:4 adds and “temple police.” Judas asked how much they would give him (cf. Matt. 26:15). It was the price of a gored slave (cf. Exod. 21:32; Zech. 11:12).

Matthew 26:16 tells us it was “thirty pieces of silver.” This fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. 11:12-13 (cf. Matt. 27:9-10). Jesus was the rejected “Shepherd.” The Gospel writers quote chapters 9-14 of Zechariah as a prophetic source or typology in relation to Jesus’ ministry.

1. Matt. 21:4-5 quotes Zech. 9:9
2. Matt. 24:3 quotes Zech. 12:10
3. Matt. 26:15 quotes Zech. 11:12-13
4. Matt. 26:31 quotes Zech. 13:7
5. Matt. 27:9-10 quotes Zech. 11:12-13

▣ **“betray”** This is the Greek term “to give over” (*paradidōmi*). The English Bibles always translate it “betray,” but this is not an established meaning. It can have a positive meaning of “entrust” (cf. Matt. 11:27) or “restore” or “command” (cf. Acts 14:26; 15:40), as well as negative sense of “to hand someone over to the authorities” or “to put someone in Satan’s hands” (cf. I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20), or for God to abandon someone to his own idolatry (cf. Acts 7:42). It is obvious that context must determine the meaning of this common verb. Betrayal fits Judas’ actions.

**14:11 “they were glad”** It does not say they were surprised. Judas’ motivation has always been a source of speculation. These religious leaders would have seen his defection from the Apostolic group as vindication of their murderous scheming!

▣ **“at an opportune time”** Luke 22:6 adds “apart from the crowd.” They were afraid of Jesus’ popularity with Galilean pilgrims present in Jerusalem for the feast (cf. 11:18; 12:12; Matt. 26:5; 27:24).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" <sup>13</sup>And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; <sup>14</sup>and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" <sup>15</sup>And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; prepare for us there." <sup>16</sup>The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

**14:12 “first day of Unleavened Bread”** There is a great problem as to which day the Lord and His disciples ate the Last Supper, Nisan 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>. John seems to imply 13<sup>th</sup> (cf. 18:29; 19:14,31,32), while the Synoptic Gospels state the 14<sup>th</sup>. Possibly the difference is related to

1. the use of the Roman calendar versus the Jewish lunar calendar
2. the different ways to start a day, i.e., evening for the Jews vs. morning for the Romans
3. the evidence that the Dead Sea community, following a solar calendar, had the Passover a day earlier as a symbol of rejecting the priestly leadership in Jerusalem

The four Gospels are eyewitness accounts written for theological and evangelistic purposes. The authors had the right, under inspiration, to select, adapt, and arrange the life and words of Jesus. This accounts for most of the perceived difficulties in the Gospel accounts (cf. Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 126-129). The very fact that they are different speaks of their genuineness. The early church accepted the four versions without trying to unify them (except for the Diatessaron of Tatian in the late second century).

Hermeneutically the Gospels need to be interpreted in light of their own context (their author’s intent) and not compared to other Gospels, just to get more historical information.

**14:13 “two of His disciples”** Luke 22:8 says it was Peter and John. From rabbinical sources we know that only two from each household were allowed in the temple to offer the lamb with the help of a priest.

▣ **“and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water”** It was highly unusual in this culture for a man to carry water and especially to carry it in a pitcher. If men were needed to carry large amounts of water they used sheep or goat skins, not clay pitchers. This is another eyewitness account of Peter.

**14:14 “say to the owner of the house”** Many believe that this was John Mark’s (the compiler of Peter’s sermons in Rome into the Gospel of Mark) home, the probable location of the Last Supper and post resurrection appearances. John Mark was Barnabas’ cousin and a participant in the initial part of the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Saul (i.e., Paul). He was also Peter’s



companion and apparently the author of the first Gospel, using Peter's memories or sermons. This seems to be a prearranged event, not a prediction.

**14:15** This was also the location of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances (cf. Acts 1:12). This room became the Jerusalem headquarters for the disciples.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:17-21**

<sup>17</sup>When it was evening He came with the twelve. <sup>18</sup>As they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." <sup>19</sup>They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" <sup>20</sup>And He said to them, "*It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.*" <sup>21</sup>For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*"

**14:17 "When it was evening"** The Jewish day begins at twilight (cf. Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). This was the Passover meal because usually Jewish evening meals were in late afternoon. Only the Passover meal was eaten after 6:00 p.m.

**14:18 "reclining"** Originally the Passover was eaten standing because of Exod. 12:11. The Jews of the first century did not use chairs, a custom which they learned from the Persians (cf. Esther 1:6; 7:8). They ate at low cushions, usually three in number, at a table in the shape of a horseshoe (so servers could bring food easily), reclining on pillows on their left elbow with their feet behind them.

▣ **"Truly"** This is literally "amen." See Special Topic at 3:28.

▣ **"that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me"** This is an allusion to Ps. 41:9. This was a cultural way of accentuating Judas' guilt (cf. John 13:18). Table fellowship was a significant cultural symbol of friendship and commitment. To betray someone with whom you had eaten would be appalling to an easterner.

**14:19 "one by one, 'Surely not I'"** Each disciple thought it might be himself. This shows that at this point in time, none of them suspected Judas. Each of them was unsure of his own standing.

**14:20 "who dips with Me in the bowl"** This was a special dish of gray colored fruit dip, which resembles brick mortar. Judas was sitting right next to Jesus in the place of honor! Jesus was still, even at this late hour, trying to spiritually reach Judas.

**14:21 "but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*"** John 13:27ff implies that Judas left after the third cup of blessing before the institution of the Lord's Supper. Judas is an enigma. His motives for betraying Jesus are never revealed. Some see him as a noble Jewish patriot (i.e., zealot) trying to force Jesus to act militarily against Rome. Others see him as a committed Jew who was upset with Jesus' rejection of the Oral Tradition and His fellowship with the outcasts and sinners of Jewish society. The Gospel of John depicts him as a thief from the beginning, someone who was driven by his love of money. However, Judas' actions after Jesus' arrest do not fit this characterization. Whatever the true motive or rationale, whatever the involvement of Satan, whatever the foreknowledge involved in predictive prophecy, Judas is responsible for his actions, as are all of us (cf. Gal. 6:7).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:22-25**

<sup>22</sup>While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body." <sup>23</sup>And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." <sup>25</sup>Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

**14:22 "took *some* bread"** Notice it was not the Passover Lamb (nor bitter herbs), but the unleavened bread (*azumos*, cf. 14:1). The Greek term here is *artos*, which is usually used to denote regular bread (cf. 3:20; 6:8,16,36,37; 7:2,5,27; 8:4,14,16,17). But it also is used of unleavened bread in the parallel of Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19. Probably the lamb had too much of a nationalistic connotation. For all the historical connections between the Passover and the Last Supper, there is a purposeful theological distinction.

If there is a sustained typology between the Exodus and Jesus, which seems to be true, then the bread takes on a special relationship to "manna" (cf. Exod. 16), given by YHWH during the wilderness wandering period. This provided a stable life-giving diet to God's people. Now YHWH gives the "true" bread of heaven, provides the "real" life-giving provision, sends the

“perfect” leader, and inaugurates the new Passover from sin and death. The NT authors often used Christological typology in their presentations of Jesus as prefigured in the OT.

Wine in the OT was known as the blood of the grape and was often used in a judicial sense (i.e., the grapes of wrath). Now it is the sacrifice which brings eternal life. The imagery is clearly seen in John 6.

▣ **“after a blessing”** There was a set procedure for the Passover meal. In all probability the symbolism of the broken bread and wine occurred at the point in the ritual called “the third cup of blessing” (cf. I Cor. 10:16).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ORDER OF PASSOVER SERVICE IN FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM**

- A. Prayer
- B. Cup of wine
- C. Hand washing by host and passing of basin to all
- D. Dip of bitter herbs and sauce
- E. Lamb and main meal
- F. Prayer and second dip of bitter herbs and sauce
- G. Second cup of wine with question-and-answer time for children (cf. Exod. 12:26-27)
- H. Singing of the first part of Hallel Psalm 113-114 and prayer
- I. Master of ceremony makes sop for each one after washing his hands
- J. All eat until filled; finish with a piece of lamb
- K. Third cup of wine after washing hands
- L. Singing second part of Hallel Psalm 115-118
- M. Fourth cup of wine

Many believe that the institution of the Lord’s Supper occurred at “K.”

▣ **“Take it; this is My body”** John 6:22ff and I Cor. 10:16 show the strong theological imagery of this ritual. Jesus’ words about His body and blood would have shocked these Jews. Cannibalism and the consumption of blood would be violations of Lev. 11. These statements are obviously symbolic, but still startling.

Jesus was symbolizing the crucifixion by breaking the bread. As the color of the wine was similar to blood, the color of the bread was similar to human flesh. Jesus was the true Bread of Life (i.e., manna, cf. John 6:31-33,51), the true Passover, the new Exodus!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LORD’S SUPPER IN JOHN 6 (MY COMMENTARY, VOL. 4, JOHN)**

- A. The Gospel of John does not record the Lord’s Supper itself, although chapters 13-17 record the dialogue and prayer in the Upper Room. This omission may be intentional. The church of the late first century began to view the ordinances in a sacramental sense. They saw them as channels of grace. John may have been reacting to this developing sacramental view by not recording Jesus’ baptism or the Lord’s Supper.
- B. John 6 is in the context of the feeding of the five thousand. However, many use it to teach a sacramental view of the Eucharist. This is the source of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (vv. 53-56).

The question over how chapter 6 relates to the Eucharist shows the dual nature of the Gospels. Obviously, the Gospels relate to Jesus’ words and life, yet they were written decades later and expressed the individual authors’ community of faith. So there are three levels of authorial intent:

- 1. the Spirit
- 2. Jesus and the original hearers
- 3. the Gospel writers and their readers

How is one to interpret? The only verifiable method must be a contextual, grammatical, lexical approach, informed by a historical setting.

- C. We must remember that the audience was Jewish and the cultural background was the rabbinical expectation of the Messiah being a super-Moses (cf. vv. 30-31), especially in regard to the Exodus experiences like “manna.” The rabbis would use Ps. 72:16 as a proof text. Jesus’ unusual statements (cf. vv. 60-62, 66), were meant to counteract the crowd’s false Messianic expectations (cf. vv. 14-15).

- D. The early church fathers did not all agree that this passage refers to the Lord's Supper. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Eusebius never mention the Lord's Supper in their discussions on this passage.
- E. The metaphors of this passage are very similar to Jesus' words used with the "woman at the well" in John 4. Earthly water and bread are used as metaphors of eternal life and spiritual realities.
- F. This multiplying of bread is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels!

**14:23 "given thanks"** The Greek term for "thanks" is *eucharistē*, from which we get the English name for the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist.

**14:24 "This is My blood of the covenant"** The color of the wine resembled the color of human blood. This phrase has three possible OT origins.

1. Exod. 24:6-8, the inauguration of the Book of the Covenant by covenant blood
2. Jer. 31:31-34, the only text in the OT which mentions "new covenant"
3. Zech. 9:11, which is in the literary unit 9-14, the source of many prophecies (i.e., Christological typology) of Jesus' life

There are two variants in the Greek manuscript traditions.

1. "the covenant" following Matt. 26:28, which is found in the Greek manuscripts  $\aleph$ , B, C, D<sup>2</sup>, and L (and also D\* and W with slight change). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives this shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).
2. "the new covenant" following Luke 22:20 and I Cor. 11:25, which is found in MSS A and E and the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations (cf. NKJV). This probably was an addition to relate Jesus' words to the "new" covenant of Jer. 31:31-34.

In all of this discussion one thing is obvious. Jesus' death was crucial to the restoration of fallen mankind to fellowship with the Father (cf. 10:45). Jesus came to (1) reveal the Father; (2) give us an example to follow; and (3) die in our place for our sin. There is no other way for redemption (cf. John 10,14). This was the central aspect of God's eternal plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **“which is poured out for many”** Jesus’ death, symbolized by His poured out blood, was a sacrifice for sin (cf. Mark 10:45; Matt. 26:28; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:11-15). The term “many” does not refer to a limited group, but is a Hebraic (or Semitic) metaphor for “all who would respond.” This can be seen in the parallelism of Rom. 5:18 and 5:19 as well as Isa. 53:6 “all” compared with 53:11-12, “many.” See note at 10:45.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: POURED OUT

The general term *cheō* means “to pour.” The intensified form, *ekcheō*, has two developed connotations:

1. innocent blood shed, Matt. 23:35; Acts 22:20
2. a sacrifice given, Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20

In Jesus these two senses meet at Calvary (cf. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* vol. 2, pp. 853-855).

**14:25 “I will never again drink”** The Passover liturgy involved four cups of blessing. The rabbis established this procedure based on Exod. 6:6-7. The third cup symbolized redemption. This is the one that forms the basis of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus refused to drink the fourth cup of blessing because it symbolized the consummation. Jesus related this to the end-time Messianic banquet (cf. Isa. 25:6; 55; Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29; 14:15,24; 22:30; Rev. 19:9,17).

▣ **“until that day”** This obviously refers to a future coming of Jesus in glory and power so different from His current situation in which He faced shame, pain, rejection, and death! The two comings of Jesus differentiate His tasks as redeemer (i.e., vicarious, substitutionary atonement) and victor/judge. This two-fold coming surprised the Jews. It was probably Jesus Himself, perhaps on the road to Emmaus, who showed the full significance of the key OT passages (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53 and Zech. 9-14).

▣ **“the kingdom of God”** See Special Topic at 1:15c.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:26

<sup>26</sup>After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

**14:26 “singing a hymn”** This Greek verb is the source of the English word “hymn.” This was probably part of the Hallel Psalms (i.e., Ps. 113-118, cf. Matt. 26:30), which was the last part of the Passover ritual. These psalms were expressions of joy and gratitude for YHWH’s redemption. They are recited or chanted in whole, or in part, at all major feast days, except the Day of Atonement. Psalms 113-114 are chanted early in the Passover meal and 115-118 towards the end of the meal.

▣ **“the Mount of Olives”** Jesus and the disciples must have regularly used this as a campground or place of prayer during the Passover period (i.e., eight days).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:27-31

<sup>27</sup>And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’” <sup>28</sup>But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” <sup>29</sup>But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” <sup>30</sup>And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.” <sup>31</sup>But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing also.

14:27

NASB, NJB	“You will all fall away”
NKJV	“All of you will be made to stumble”
NRSV	“You will all become deserters”
TEV	“All of you will run away”

This is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This is another evidence that Jesus knows and controls future events. The PASSIVE idea is captured in the ASV translation “all ye shall be offended” (i.e., *skandalizō*, which was used of baited trap sticks). There is a second FUTURE PASSIVE, “will be scattered,” from Zech. 13:7. This same terminology of unbelief (i.e., “fall away”) was used for others rejecting Christ (cf. Matt. 11:6; 13:21,57; 24:10; 26:31). The disciples’ faith will fail! Peter’s denials were only exemplary of all their fears.

▣ **“it is written”** Literally this is “it has been written,” which is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. It was a characteristic phrase (i.e., Hebrew idiom) referring to the inspired OT.

▣ **“I WILL STRIKE”** This is a quote from Zech. 13:7. It was the Father’s plan that Jesus should give His life as a sacrifice for sin (cf. Isa. 53:4,6,10; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; II Cor. 5:21).

**14:28** Jesus told the disciples several times that He would meet them on a mount in Galilee (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10,16). This special meeting was the occasion for the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:16-20), which is probably the post-resurrection appearance spoken of in I Cor. 15:6. This does not refer to the ascension, which took place from the Mount of Olives forty days after the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:12).

This was a prediction of His resurrection, but they did not perceive its significance. This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11). This same Trinitarian emphasis can be seen in vv. 9-10. See Special Topic: the Trinity at 1:11.

**14:29 “Even though”** This is literally “even if” (cf. NKJV and NJB). It is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Peter could imagine the others fleeing, but not himself!

▣ **“yet”** This is the strong ADVERSATIVE *alla*. Peter was making the emphatic assertion that he would never leave Jesus (cf. Luke 22:33; John 13:37-38). Peter was publicly proclaiming an allegiance he would not, could not fulfill! His desire superceded his ability!

**14:30 “this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times”** “You, yourself” is emphatic! This is a FUTURE MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Luke’s account is longer (cf. 22:31-34). The detail that the rooster crows twice is an eyewitness memory of Peter. It is only recorded in Mark’s Gospel.

**14:31**

NASB “kept saying insistently”

NKJV “spoke more vehemently”

NRSV “said vehemently”

TEV “answered even more strongly”

NJB “repeated still more earnestly”

This term (*perisseia*) for excess or extreme degree is used often in its various forms in the NT (cf. Matt. 5:20; 27:23; Acts 26:11; Phil. 1:9; I Thess. 4:1). The intensified form with its *ek* prepositional prefix is only found in Mark. It is probably from Peter himself! He remembered how vehement his denial was!

▣ **“Even if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action. Literally “even if it must be.”

▣ **“I will not deny You”** Peter truly felt this way. With all his heart and will power he was determined to stand by Jesus! As David’s sins and subsequent forgiveness function to encourage later believers, so too, Peter’s assertions and failures. Sinful, weak humans want to do the right thing (cf. Rom. 7), they just find themselves incapable! Jesus can deal with failure, but not unrepentant unbelief.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:32-42

<sup>32</sup>They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." <sup>33</sup>And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." <sup>35</sup>And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the

ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. <sup>36</sup>And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." <sup>37</sup>And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" <sup>38</sup>Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>39</sup>Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. <sup>40</sup>And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. <sup>41</sup>And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup>Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

**14:32 “Gethsemane”** “Gethsemane” means “oil press” in Hebrew. It apparently was a private garden just outside the city limits of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. It was illegal to have gardens within the city because the manure needed for the plants made the city ceremonially unclean. Apparently Jesus came to this garden quite often. It is even possible that during Passion Week He bivouacked here with His disciples. Judas knew the place well.

▣ **“Sit here until I have prayed”** In the parallels in Matt. 26:41 and Luke 22:40 Jesus asks them to pray that they would not enter into temptation.

**14:33 “He took with Him Peter and James and John”** This was the inner circle of leadership among the disciples. They were present with Jesus on several special occasions when the other disciples were not. Apparently this led to both special training and jealousy on the part of the other disciples. Exactly why Jesus had an inner circle is uncertain. The list of the Twelve is always in four groupings of three. The groups never change. It is possible that the groups formed a rotating schedule for the disciples to go home periodically and check on their families. See Special Topic at 3:16.



NASB    “began to be very distressed and troubled”  
 NKJV    “he began to be troubled and deeply distressed”  
 NRSV    “began to be distressed and agitated”  
 TEV    “Distress and anguish came over him”  
 NJB    “he began to feel terror and anguish”

Jesus was in a deep state of anxiety! These are strong terms in Greek. As modern readers we are on very holy ground here in the garden as we see the Son of God in what may have been His most vulnerable human moment. Jesus must have related this account to His disciples after His resurrection. Apparently it was meant to be helpful for those who face temptation and for those who seek to understand the agony and cost of Jesus’ Calvary experience.

▣ **“My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death”** This is an astonishingly emphatic statement of concern, fear, and grief on Jesus’ part. Although the text itself does not provide the reason, it seems that what Jesus feared was the disruption in the intimate fellowship He had always known with the Father. This is characterized by Jesus’ words in 15:34. This is one of the most human moments we are allowed to witness in Jesus’ struggle of faith.

This was an Old Testament idiom (cf. Ps. 42:5) which expressed the tremendous intensity which was involved in the redemption of sinful mankind. All of Psalm 42 reflects Jesus’ experience of rejection and death as does Psalm 22. Something of the struggle can be seen in the parallel of Luke 22:43-44 (although the UBS<sup>4</sup> rates their omission “A” [certain]), which records that an angel came to minister to Him and He sweat great drops of blood. The victory over the evil one was won here in the garden. The insidiousness of Satan’s temptation in Matthew 4 and of Peter’s supposedly helpful, but extremely destructive, comments in Matt. 16:22, are fully revealed in this passage.

▣ **“remain here and keep watch”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE followed by a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. They were on guard duty watching for Judas and the mob, but they fell asleep!

**14:35 “fell to the ground and began to pray”** These are two IMPERFECTS. Usually this tense means continual action in past time, but it is obvious this cannot be what is meant here. The other typical usage of this Greek verb tense is the beginning of an action in past time. Praying prostrate shows the intense emotion.

**14:35 “if it were possible”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective. Jesus knew YHWH was able to do anything (cf. v. 36, “all things are possible for You!”).

▣ **“the hour”** – See Special Topic following

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOUR

The term “hour” is used in several different ways in the Gospels, as

1. a time reference (cf. Matt. 8:13; Luke 7:21; John 11:9)
2. a metaphor for a time of testing and trial (cf. Matt. 10:19; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12)
3. a metaphor for Jesus beginning His ministry (cf. John 2:4; 4:23)
4. a metaphor for the day of judgment (i.e., Second Coming, cf. Matt. 24:36,44; 25:13; Mark 13:32; John 5:25,28)
5. a metaphor for Jesus’ passion (cf. Matt. 26:45; Mark 14:35,41; John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1)

▣ **“the hour might pass Him by”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Jesus is asserting that YHWH is able to do anything and Jesus is hoping that He might be spared the cross (cf. v. 36). This was exactly Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, cf. James Stewart’s *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp.39-46). From Matt. 26:39,42 and 44 and Mark 14:39 and 41 we learn that Jesus prayed this same prayer three times, which was a Jewish way of showing intensity.

**14:36 “Abba”** This is Aramaic for the familiar term that children call their fathers at home, dad, daddy, pop, papa, etc. Jesus knew family intimacy with YHWH (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). His death will provide this intimacy to us.

This context is the only time the Aramaic word *Abba* is used (i.e., in the Greek text) by Jesus. Jesus reveals the intense struggle He faced in this moment of fleshly temptation (i.e., He describes His intense emotions; He fell on the ground; He prayed three times). Here He played His trump card, His best chance of changing the Father’s mind about Calvary. He calls YHWH by the most intimate family term! But still every prayer was concluded with “not my will, but Thine.” God the Father demonstrates His love for fallen humanity by not responding to Jesus’ expressed will. There needed to be an ultimate sacrifice for sin, but it was not easy or without great cost, emotionally and physically, for Jesus and for the Father!

Jesus knows us because He knows all the temptations of humanity (yet without sin). Fear and terror and discouragement and disillusionment are not sin! The victory was won at Gethsemane.

▣ **“Father”** The Gospel of Mark often uses Aramaic words and phrases (cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36;15:34). Aramaic would have been the spoken language of Jesus and the disciples. Mark translates each of these, which shows he was not writing for Jewish readers, but Gentile readers, probably Romans because of all the Latin terms and phrases found in Mark. See Special Topic: Father at 13:32.

▣ **“this cup”** This was an OT metaphor for one’s destiny (cf. Ps. 16:5; 23:5; Jer. 51:2; Matt. 20:22). It was usually used in a judgmental (i.e., negative) sense (cf. Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15-16,27-28; 49:12; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:31-33; Hab. 2:16). This idiom is often associated with drunkenness, which is another OT metaphor for judgment (cf. Job 21:20; Isa. 29:9; 63:6; Jer. 25:15-16,27-28). Jesus wants out! Fear is not sin. He faced fear with faith; so must we!

▣ **“yet not what I will, but what You will”** The PRONOUNS “I” and “You” are in the EMPHATIC POSITION in the Greek. This was Jesus’ continuing submission to the Father’s will. In this context the true humanity and faith of Jesus shines forth! Though His human nature cries out for deliverance, His heart is set on fulfilling the will of the Father in substitutionary atonement (cf. 10:45; Matt. 26:39).

**14:37,40 “found them sleeping”** These disciples had also fallen asleep during the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 26:43 and Luke 9:32). They were not evil or even thoughtless, but human! Before we are too quick to condemn the disciples, let’s note that in Luke 22:45 the phrase “they were asleep from sorrow” describes that they were unable to bear the pain of Jesus’ prophecy about His own death and their subsequent scattering. Though Jesus longed to have human fellowship and intercession at this time of ultimate crisis in His life, He had to face this moment alone, and He faced it for all believers!

**14:37 “Simon”** This is the only time Jesus calls him “Simon” since He renamed him in 3:16. The rock (i.e., Peter) was anything but stable, sure, and trustworthy. Peter must have remembered this “reverse” name change with great pain. I am sure that he got the message!

**14:38 “Keep watching and praying”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE and a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. The following context reveals the enemy.

▣ **“that you may not come into temptation”** There have been several theories as to what “temptation” refers to in this context:

1. Jesus’ immediate prophecy in v. 27
2. to the disciples sleeping instead of praying, vv. 37,40

3. to the disciples desertion of Jesus in v. 56
4. to Peter's denial in vv. 69-75
5. to governmental or religious trials (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 9:22; 16:2)

The term "temptation" (*peirasmos*) had the connotation of "to tempt or try with the goal of destruction" (cf. Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4; James 1:13). It is often contrasted with another Greek term for test (*dokimazo*) which had the connotation of "to try or tempt with a view toward strengthening." However, these connotations are not always present in every context. Theologically it can be said that God does not test or tempt His children to destroy them, but He does provide opportunities for spiritual growth through trials (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Duet. 8:2,16; Matt. 4; Luke 4; Heb. 5:8). However, He always provides a way through (cf. I Cor. 10:13). See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing at 1:13.

▣ **"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"** This may be a comment on Peter's and the other disciples' words in vv. 29,31. Jesus understands this tension completely (cf. v. 36).

The use of "spirit" in connection with mankind's human spirit speaks of our inner life and thoughts (cf. Ps. 51:10,12,17). In Paul's writings "spirit" is often contrasted with "flesh" (cf. Rom. 8:1-11).

**14:40 "they did not know what to answer Him"** They had no explainable reason (cf. 9:6) except the weakness of the flesh (cf. Luke 9:32).

**14:41 "Are you still sleeping and resting"** It is hard to interpret this Greek idiom. Is it a question? Is it irony? Is it a statement? Although the meaning is uncertain, it is obvious that Jesus has won the victory and He now stands erect, ready to face the night trials, the morning beatings and the crucifixion.

▣ **"It is enough"** This term caused several scribal changes in the Greek manuscript tradition. Does this phrase refer to the disciples' sleep? It can be translated (1) "it is enough"; (2) "it is settled"; or (3) "it is over" (cf. NJB "it is all over"). It was used in the Koine Greek papyri found in Egypt of something paid in full (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 57-58). This, then, would be something of a parallel to John 19:30, "it is finished" or "it is paid in full." Possibly it refers to Judas and his betrayal, which must have weighed heavily on Jesus. Jesus won the spiritual victory in Gethsemane!

**14:41c-42** These staccato statements are emphasized by having no CONJUNCTIONS or CONNECTORS (*asyndeton*) between them. The events were unfolding just as Jesus had predicted. The hour had come.

▣ **"the hour has come"** See Special Topic at 14:35.

▣ **"betrayed"** This term (*paradidōmi*) normally means "delivered into the hands of" (cf. 9:31), but its connection with Judas in most English translations intensify the meaning of "betray." See fuller note at 14:10d.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:43-50**

<sup>43</sup>Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. <sup>44</sup>Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." <sup>45</sup>After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. <sup>46</sup>They laid hands on Him and seized Him. <sup>47</sup>But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>48</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? <sup>49</sup>Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures." <sup>50</sup>And they all left Him and fled.

**14:43 "Immediately"** See note at 1:10.

▣ **"a crowd"** John 18:3,12 says a Roman cohort was present. Luke 22:52 says representatives from the Sanhedrin were in the crowd, which implies the temple police. The reason for so many soldiers was because it was the Passover season and the authorities were afraid of a riot (cf. 14:2; Matt. 26:5; 27:24).

▣ **"swords and clubs"** This term "swords" referred to the short sword worn by the Roman soldiers in their belt. "Clubs" refers specifically to the weapons of the temple police.

▣ **"the chief priests and the scribes and the elders"** This referred to the Sanhedrin. See Special Topic at 12:13.



**14:44 “seize Him”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE.



NASB, NRSV,

TEV

“lead Him away under guard”

NKJV

“lead Him away safely”

NJB

“see that he is well guarded when you lead him away”

This is the Greek term *sphallomai* (“to fall or stumble”) with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates it. This term is metaphorical for “to be secure, firm, steady.” Judas was afraid Jesus would do something to thwart His arrest. This reveals Judas’ fear. He had seen Jesus’ miracles and knew His power.

**14:45 “saying, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed Him”** Kissing on the cheek or forehead was the normal greeting in this culture (especially between rabbis). Read Jesus’ comments on Judas’ actions in Matt. 26:50; Luke 22:48. This sign shows that it was probably Roman soldiers because the temple police would have recognized Jesus.

**14:47 “But one of those who stood by drew his sword”** From the parallel in John 18:10 and Luke 22:50-51, we know that this was Peter and the servant who was wounded was Malchus. The disciples had previously been admonished to buy swords (cf. Luke 22:36-38), but obviously, they had misunderstood Jesus’ true meaning concerning this issue. It must be said on Peter’s behalf that he was fully willing to die for his Lord at this point. In the face of great odds, he drew one of two swords. But, again, the inappropriateness and impulsiveness of his actions characterized his personality.

▣ **“the slave of the high priests”** John 18:10 names him Malchus.

▣ **“cut off his ear”** In Luke 22:51, Jesus put it back!

**14:48**

NASB, NKJV

“a robber”

NRSV, NJB

“a bandit”

TEV

“an outlaw”

They are treating Jesus as a criminal, not a blasphemer. They were doing to Jesus what should have been done to Barabbas (for whom the same word is used, cf. John 18:40).

**14:49 “Every day I was with you in the temple teaching”** This was addressed to the members of the Sanhedrin or temple police. Jesus exposes their secret agenda.

▣ **“But this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures”** In v. 50 “all His disciples forsook Him” (cf. 14:27, which quotes Zech. 13:7 and Matt. 26:31). One wonders how John 18:15-16 fits this prophecy. It seems that John accompanied Jesus through all the trials and was present at the crucifixion (cf. John 19:26-27).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14: 51-52**

<sup>51</sup>A young man was following Him, wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over *his naked body*; and they seized him. <sup>52</sup>But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

**14:51-52 “young man. . .wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over *his naked body*”** Church tradition says this was John Mark, the compiler of this Gospel. He was an early missionary companion of his uncle, Barnabas (cf. Acts 12:25), and Saul (Paul) of Tarsus. Tradition strongly asserts that he was the scribe for Peter’s recollections of Jesus’ life (i.e., the Gospel of Mark). Tradition also says it was in his home that the Last Supper was held (cf. Acts 12:12).

It is uncertain why he was dressed like this. Possibly he was told while sleeping that Jesus was in the process of being arrested or maybe he tried to stay close to Jesus and the disciples and was sleeping close by in the garden.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:53-65**

<sup>53</sup>They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. <sup>54</sup>Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. <sup>55</sup>Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. <sup>56</sup>For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. <sup>57</sup>Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, <sup>58</sup>“We heard Him

say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"<sup>59</sup>Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. <sup>60</sup>The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" <sup>61</sup>But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?" <sup>62</sup>And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." <sup>63</sup>Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? <sup>64</sup>"You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. <sup>65</sup>Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps *in the face*.

**14:53 “They led Jesus away to the high priest”** John 18:13a mentions Annas, but Caiaphas was High Priest from A.D. 18-36 (cf. Matt. 26:57). The Synoptic Gospels do not record the interrogation by Annas. He was the previous High Priest and really the power behind the office (cf. John 18:13b).

▣ **“all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes”** This phrase was used to designate the Great Council, the Sanhedrin (cf. v. 55). See Special Topic at 12:13.

**14:54** This verse sets the stage for Peter’s denials in the courtyard. Peter could not stay away, but would not/could not identify himself with Jesus. What irony!

▣

NASB	“he was sitting with the officers”
NKJV	“he sat with the servants”
NRSV	“he was sitting with the guards”
TEV	“he sat down with the guards”
NJB	“was sitting with the attendants”

This is a PERIPHRASTIC IMPERFECT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. It seems to imply that Peter tried to act like one of the servants/attendants. He wanted to melt into the group, but the light on his face and the Galilean accent gave him away. Peter remembers this night well!

**14:55** This was not a legal trial; it was a sham trial (cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in The New Testament*, pp. 24-47).

**14:56 “For many were giving false testimony against Him”** The IMPERFECT TENSE (in this verse twice and in vv. 57 and 59) shows the repeated attempt at false testimonies, but no two agreed. This was a parade of bad liars!

▣ **“their testimony was not consistent”** In the OT it took the testimony of two witnesses to convict (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Also in the OT if someone bore false witness they were to bear the penalty of the accused.

**14:58 “I will destroy this temple”** This verse is a good example about Jesus’ use of metaphors to describe upcoming events. The word “temple” stands for two things and two time frames.

1. Jesus’ body (cf. John 2:19-22) crucified, but resurrected in three days (i.e., the sign of Jonah, cf. Matt. 12:39-40; Luke 11:29-32). This was to happen within hours.
2. Herod’s temple in Jerusalem was going to be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and not rebuilt. This was a future judgment in about 40 years, but it reflects an eschatological judgment (i.e., II Thess. 2; and Revelation).

It is easy to see how Jesus’ temporal, yet eschatological, kingdom and its ethics could be misunderstood by dogmatic, legalistic religionists, both then and now.

▣ **“in three days”** This time reference (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) is linked to OT prophecy in I Cor. 15:3-4. The “three day” time frame is linked both to a “new temple” and the new resurrection body. Jesus intentionally merged these two. The temple of the new age is the believer, both individually and corporately (cf. I Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

▣ **“I will build another made without hands”** This is an awesome prophecy of Jesus’ death and resurrection. As the temple was central in OT worship, now it will be Jesus Himself. He is the rejected cornerstone! He is the new focus of worship!

He has the power to lay down His own life and pick it up again (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18). He is in total control of His life and death and resurrection.

**14:60 “The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned”** The High Priest was trying to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. This was illegal under Jewish law, as was a night trial and a trial and punishment on the same day.

**14:61 “He kept silent”** This may be fulfillment of Isa. 53:7 (cf. Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14; Mark 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9).

▣ **“Again the high priest was questioning Him”** Matt. 26:63 adds that he put Him under an oath.

▣ **“Christ”** This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah which meant “an anointed one.” In the OT prophets, priests, and kings were anointed as a special symbol of God’s choice and equipment for an assigned task. The term came to be used for the special royal “Son of David” (cf. II Sam. 7) who would redeem and restore Israel.

▣ **“the Son of the Blessed One”** “Blessed One” is a common Jewish title (i.e., circumlocution) for God. The Jews did not expect the Messiah to be God incarnate, but a gifted/empowered human, like the Judges. But Jesus used this family relationship to assert His fully equality with the Father (cf. John 5:18; 10:30,33; and also 1:1).

**14:62 “I am”** This may have been an allusion to the OT name of the Covenant God, YHWH, which was from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14; Deut. 32:39; Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; John 4:26; 8:24,28,58; 13:19; 18:5). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 12:36. This very straightforward answer is similar to Luke 22:70. Matthew records a much more cryptic response (cf. Matt. 26:64).

It is Mark’s Gospel that depicts Jesus’ self understanding from the very beginning as God’s Son and Messiah (cf. 1:1). The demons also recognized Him as such and verbally affirmed Him (cf. 1:24,34; 3:11), but the disciples were slow to understand (cf. 8:29) both Jesus’ person and work. They still looked through first century, Jewish eyes (as did the High Priest).

▣ **“THE SON OF MAN SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER”** This is an allusion to Ps. 110:1. It was an anthropomorphic metaphor for the place of authority. The term “power” is a circumlocution reference to YHWH. Jesus (i.e., the Son of Man, cf. 14:21,41,62) is asserting in eschatological terms which they would have understood that He was YHWH’s Messiah. Even though Ps. 110:4 has a priestly connotation, this verse has a royal connotation (cf. Heb. 1:3).

It must be reiterated that the High Priest’s understanding of the question in 14:61 was different from Jesus’ understanding (the same is true of Pilate’s questions in chapter 15). The High Priest understood it as a threat to his power and authority and Rome’s power and authority. The OT concept of the Messiah as a conquering King was equally shared by the Apostles (cf. Mark 10:37).

Jesus, however, saw His kingdom as future and spiritual (cf. John 18:36). This is why He quotes these eschatological passages from Psalm 110 and Daniel 7.

There is surely a paradox involved in the two comings, one as humble, suffering servant and one as glorified King and Judge. The OT presents both, but the Jews focused only on the second. This is the same theological tension as the Kingdom of God—inaugurated, but not consummated! It is so hard for us to imagine how difficult it was for Jewish people of Jesus’ day to understand His message.

▣ **“COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN”** This is a quote from Dan. 7:13. It is a phrase that asserted the Deity of Jesus in very clear OT terms. No one rode on the clouds except YHWH, but now His “Son” does also (cf. 13:26; Acts 1:9; Rev. 1:7).

**14:63 “Tearing His clothes”** This was a sign of a deeply disturbed spirit caused by the supposed blasphemy. The penalty for blasphemy from Lev. 24:15 was death by stoning. Jesus deserved to die on the basis of Deut. 13:1-3 and 18:22 if He was not the Coming One, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. There is no middle ground here. Either He is who He claimed to be or He is a blasphemer who deserved death (cf. Josh McDowell’s, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*).

**14:64 “blasphemy”** Speaking falsehood about YHWH deserved the death penalty by stoning (cf. Lev. 24:14-16).

**14:65 “to spit at Him”** This was an OT symbol of rejection (cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9; Job 17:6; 30:10; Isa. 50:6). Members of the Sanhedrin and the Roman soldiers (cf. 15:19) spit on Jesus.

▣ **“to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, ‘Prophecy!’”** They blindfolded Him, hit Him and then asked, “Who hit you?” They were mocking His claim to be God’s prophet. The rabbis of Jesus’ day had interpreted Isa. 11:3 that the Messiah could judge by smell, not just sight. This may or may not refer to this incident. It certainly relates to Isa. 52:14. The rabbis interpreted this verse by saying the Messiah would have leprosy, but I think this refers to these severe beatings by several different groups of soldiers.

Several Greek manuscripts expand this text in Mark to reflect Matt. 26:68 and Luke 22:64.



NASB	“to beat Him with their fists”
NKJV	“struck Him with the palms of their hands”
NRSV	“to strike him”
TEV	“hit him”
NJB	“hitting him”

This account of Jesus' abuse uses the Greek terms *kolaphizō*, which means to beat with the fist, and *hraphizō*, which means to slap with the open hand (cf. Matt. 26:67). The slap with an open hand is an Oriental symbol of contempt (cf. Matt. 5:39; John 18:22; 19:3). These same terms refer to “beating with rods” in Acts 16:27.

Both the Sanhedrin and the Roman soldiers humiliated Jesus as well as physically abused Him (cf. Isa. 52:14; 53:4).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:66-72

<sup>66</sup>As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, <sup>67</sup>and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." <sup>68</sup>But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup>The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is *one* of them!" <sup>70</sup>But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are *one* of them, for you are a Galilean too." <sup>71</sup>But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" <sup>72</sup>Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

**14:66 “one of the servant-girls of the high priest came”** John 18:17 says that she was the gate keeper. Matthew, as usual, has two persons, while Mark only has one servant (cf. Matt. 26:69-71). Peter must have told John Mark this embarrassing story or he used it in one of his sermons in Rome and John Mark heard it.

**14:67 “seeing Peter”** It was a full moon (at Passover). She could clearly see Peter by the firelight (cf. vv. 54, 67; John 18:18,25) and the moonlight.

**“Jesus the Nazarene”** The Jews who grew up in Galilee (cf. Matt. 26:69) had a distinct accent. This linked Jesus to his disciples (cf. v. 70). See Special Topic at 10:47.

**14:68 “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about”** The exact order of these three accusations differs from Gospel to Gospel. The fact that Peter denied Jesus three times with successive emphasis is common to all of the accounts.

**“And he went out onto the porch”** Apparently Peter tried to leave. The ancient Greek uncial manuscripts are evenly divided over whether the phrase “and the rooster crowed” should be included at v. 68 (MSS A, C, D as well as the Vulgate, Peshitta translations include it, while  $\aleph$ , B, L, and W omit it). It clearly explains “the second time a cock crowed” of v. 72. Some modern translations (cf. NASB, NIV) omit it, but several include it with a footnote (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB). The UBS<sup>4</sup> cannot decide which is original.

**14:70 “after a little while”** Luke 22:59 has “about an hour.”

**“Galilean”** Either Peter's dialect or possibly his clothing gave him away.

**14:71 “began to curse and swear”** The term “curse” (*anathematizō*) originally referred to something devoted to God (*anathēma*), but came to refer to a curse (cf. Acts 23:12,14,21). It was a way of asserting the trustworthiness of a statement by calling down the judgment of God on oneself if not telling the truth.

Peter, in the strongest cultural ways (i.e., an oath and swearing) perjured himself before God! Judas did nothing worse than Peter! Peter denied His Lord in repeated, emphatic, and binding terms publicly (cf. Matt. 26:34,74).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE (ANATHEMA)

There are several words in Hebrew for “curse.” *Herem* was used of something given to God (cf. LXX as anathema, Lev. 27:28), usually for destruction (cf. Deut. 7:26; Josh. 6:17-18; 17:12). It was a term used in the concept of “holy war.” God said to destroy the Canaanites and Jericho was the first opportunity, the “first fruits.”

In the NT *anathema* and its related forms were used in several different senses:

1. as a gift or offering to God (cf. Luke 21:5)
2. as a death oath (cf. Acts 23:14)
3. to curse and swear (cf. Mark 14:71)
4. a curse formula related to Jesus (cf. I Cor. 12:3)
5. a giving of someone or something to the judgment or destruction of God (cf. Rom. 9:3; I Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9).

▣ **“I do not know this man”** It is possible the phrase “this man” was a derogatory Semitic idiom referring to Jesus.

**14:72 “a rooster crowed a second time”** Peter remembered Jesus’ words (cf. Luke 22:31-32). Luke 22:61 says Jesus looked at him. Apparently Jesus was being moved from Annas’ to Caiaphas’ part of the High Priest’s palace.

The phrase “a second time” is omitted in some Greek manuscripts. The problem scribes faced was that the other three Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Luke and John) only mention one rooster crowing, while Mark apparently has two (cf. MSS A, B, C<sup>2</sup>, D and W), so some manuscripts omit the phrase (cf. MSS  $\aleph$ , C and L).

▣ **“And he began to weep”** Peter was fulfilling prophecy in his denials and giving hope for all believers who have denied Jesus with their tongue, with their lives and with their priorities. There is also hope for anyone who turns back to Him in faith (cf. John 21).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is there a contradiction between Mark and John as to the day on which the Lord’s Supper occurred?
2. Why was Mary so extravagant? Why did Jesus allow it?
3. Does v. 7 teach Jesus’ lack of concern for the poor?
4. Why were the religious leaders trying to kill Jesus?
5. What about Judas, how are we to explain his actions?
6. How is the Lord’s Supper related to Passover? What is the significance of the Lord’s Supper?
7. Why is Gethsemane so paradoxical (i.e., Jesus wants the cup to pass, but also wants God’s will)?
8. Why was the High Priest so upset by Jesus’ quoting Ps. 110 and Dan. 7:13?

# MARK 15

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus Before Pilate 15:1-5	Jesus Faces Pilate 15:1-5	Jesus Before Pilate 15:1-5	Jesus Before Pilate 15:1-2a 15:2b 15:3-4 15:5	Jesus Before Pilate 15:1 15:2-5
Jesus Sentenced to Die 15:6-15	Taking the Place of Barabbas 15:6-15	15:6-15	Jesus is Sentenced to Death 15:6-10 15:11-12 15:13 15:14a 15:14b 15:15	15:6-15
The Soldiers Mock Jesus 15:16-20	The Soldiers Mock Jesus 15:16-20	The Crucifixion 15:16-20	The Soldiers Make Fun of Jesus 15:16-20	Jesus Crowned with Thorns 15:16-20a
The Crucifixion of Jesus 15:21-32	The King on a Cross 15:21-32	15:21-24  15:25-32	Jesus is Crucified 15:21-28  15:29-30 15:31-32a 15:32b	The Way of the Cross 15:20b-22 The Crucifixion 15:23-28  The Crucified Jesus is Mocked 15:29-32
The Death of Jesus 15:33-41	Jesus Dies on the Cross 15:33-41	15:33-41	The Death of Jesus 15:33-34 15:35-36 15:37 15:38-39 15:40-41	The Death of Jesus 15:33-39   The Women on Calvary 15:40-41
The Burial of Jesus 15:42-47	Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb 15:42-47	15:42-47	The Burial of Jesus 15:42-47	The Burial 15:42-47

## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. v) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. <sup>2</sup>Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "It is as you say." <sup>3</sup>The chief priests *began* to accuse Him harshly. <sup>4</sup>Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" <sup>5</sup>But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

**15:1 “Early in the morning”** Mark, like all Jewish writings, does not focus on specific times. It is probable that the Jews of Jesus’ day divided the night and day into twelve hours each (cf. John 11:9), with three four-hour segments. The twenty-four hour day comes from Babylon. The Greeks and Jews borrowed it from them. The sundial was divided into twelve segments.

In chapter 15 Mark has several time markers;

1. sunrise, v. 1 (around 6 A.M. depending on the time of the year)
2. third hour, v. 25 (around 9 A.M.)
3. sixth hour, v. 33 (around noon)
4. ninth hour, v. 34 (around 3 P.M.)
5. evening, v. 42 (sunset, around 6 P.M.)

Luke 22:66-71 gives the details of this meeting. This early meeting was held in an attempt to give some legality to their illegal night trial (cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, pp. 24-47). The chronology of Jesus’ trial before Pilate and His crucifixion is:

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Pilate’s Verdict				6 <sup>th</sup> Hour 19:14
Crucifixion		3 <sup>rd</sup> Hour 15:25		
Darkness Fell	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 27:45	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 15:33	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 23:44	
Jesus Cried Out	9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 27:46	9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 15:34		

When these time designations are compared, two interpretive options arise: (1) they are the same. John used Roman time, counting from 12:00 a.m. (cf. Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 364), and the Synoptics used Jewish time, counting from 6:00 a.m. (2) John is asserting a later time for Jesus’ crucifixion which would be another example of the differences between the Synoptics and John. However, it seems from John 1:39 and 4:6 that John sometimes uses Jewish time and sometimes Roman time (cf. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, Vol. 1, p. 403).

The time designations may be symbolic in all the Gospels for they relate to (1) time of daily sacrifices (i.e., the continual) in the Temple (9 a.m. and 3 p.m., cf. Acts 2:15; 3:1) and (2) just after noon was the traditional time to kill the Passover Lamb on Nisan 14. The Bible, being an ancient eastern book, does not focus on strict chronology as do modern western historical accounts.

▣ **“the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council”** See Special Topic: Sanhedrin at 12:13.

▣ **“immediately”** Mark’s gospel is characterized by action (“then,” “and,” “immediately”). Jesus is revealed primarily through His actions. The pace of the narrative moves forward through these action words. See note at 1:10.

▣ **“and binding Jesus”** This may have been a common procedure with criminals or subconsciously it showed their fear of Jesus. Many were afraid He was a magician or sorcerer and that His power was in His hands.

▣ **“delivered Him to Pilate”** Exactly where this was done is uncertain. Most scholars think Pilate stayed at Herod’s palace when in Jerusalem. His normal residence was Caesarea by the sea, where He used another of Herod’s palaces as the praetorium. Others feel he stayed in the military headquarters, which was the fortress Antonia, next to the temple. The time would be at daybreak, following Roman customs of early court (probably because of the heat). Pilate ruled Palestine as a representative of the Emperor from A.D. 25/26-36/37 and then was removed because of repeated accusations by Vitellius, Legate of Syria.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PONTIUS PILATE

### I. The Man

- A. Place and time of birth unknown
- B. Of the Equestrian order (upper middle class of Roman society)
- C. Married, but no known children
- D. Earlier administrative appointments (of which there must have been several) unknown

### II. His Personality

- A. Two different views
  1. Philo (*Legatio and Gaium*, 299-305) and Josephus (*Antiq.* 18.3.1 and *Jewish Wars* 2.9.2-4) depict him as a cruel and uncompassionate dictator.
  2. The NT (Gospels, Acts) presents a weak, easily manipulated Roman procurator
- B. Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, pp. 143-148, gives a plausible explanation of these two views.
  1. Pilate was not appointed procurator in A.D. 26 under Tiberius, who was pro-Jewish (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 160-161) by the advice of Sejanus, Tiberius’ anti-Jewish, chief advisor.
  2. Tiberius suffered a loss of political power to L. Aelius Sejanus, his praetorian prefect who became the real power behind the throne and who hated Jews (Philo, *Legatio land Gaium*, 159-160).
  3. Pilate was a protege of Sejanus and tried to impress him by
    - a. bringing Roman standards into Jerusalem (A.D. 26), which other procurators had not done. These symbols of Roman gods inflamed the Jews (cf. Josephus’ *Antiq.* 18.3.1; *Jewish Wars* 2.9.2-3).
    - b. minting coins (A.D. 29-31) which had images of Roman worship engraved on them. Josephus says he was purposefully trying to overturn Jewish laws and customs (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.4.1-2).
    - c. taking money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct in Jerusalem (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.3.2; *Jewish Wars* 2.9.3).
    - d. having several Galileans killed while offering a sacrifice at Passover in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:12).
    - e. bringing Roman shields into Jerusalem in A.D. 31. Herod the Great’s son appealed to him to remove them, but he would not, so they wrote Tiberius, who demanded they be removed back to Caesarea by the sea (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 299-305).
    - f. having many Samaritans slaughtered on Mt. Gerizim (A.D. 36/37) as they searched for sacred objects of their religion, which had been lost. This caused Pilate’s local superior (Vitellius, Prefect of Syria) to remove him from office and send him to Rome (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.4.1-2).
  4. Sejanus was executed in A.D. 31 and Tiberius was restored to full political power; therefore, #a, b, c and d were possibly done by Pilate to earn Sejanus’ trust; #e and f could have been attempts to earn Tiberius’ trust, but may have backfired.



5. It is obvious with a pro-Jewish emperor restored, plus an official letter to procurators from Tiberius to be kind to Jews (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 160-161), that the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem took advantage of Pilate's political vulnerability with Tiberius and manipulated him to have Jesus crucified. This theory of Barnett brings the two views of Pilate together in a plausible way.

### III. His Fate

- A. He was recalled and arrived in Rome just after Tiberius' death (A.D. 37).
- B. He was not reappointed.
- C. His life is unknown after this. There are many later theories, but no secure facts.

**15:2 "Pilate questioned Him"** In what language? The chances of Pilate speaking Aramaic are less than that Jesus could speak Koine Greek. For a good discussion of this see

1. "Did Jesus Speak Greek" by Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, chapter 21, pp. 253-264 in *Approaches to the Bible: the Best of Bible Review*
2. "The Languages of the New Testament" by J. Howard Greenlee in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 410-411

▣ **"Are You the King of the Jews"** "You" is emphatic and sarcastic. Luke 23:1-2 lists the charges of the Sanhedrin. John 19:8-19, adds great detail to the conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Pilate was not concerned with the religious aspect of the charge, but the political aspect.



NASB, NKJV      **"It is as you say"**  
NRSV, TEV      **"You say so"**  
NJB              **"It is you who say it"**

This is literally "you say that I Am," which may be a Hebraic idiom of affirmation (cf. Matt. 26:25,64; Luke 22:70; 23:3) or a cryptic way of answering, implying, "You say so, but implying I am a different kind of king." This seems to have been a private consultation (cf. John 18:33-38) within the Praetorium. Jesus must have told the disciples about it or John was present. The Jews would not have entered because it would have made them ceremonially unclean to eat Passover.

The account of Jesus' interrogation by Herod Antipas is left out of Mark's Gospel, but is found in Luke 23:6-12.

### 15:3

NASB              **"began to accuse Him harshly"**  
NKJV, NRSV      **"accused Him of many things"**  
TEV                **"were accusing Jesus of many things"**  
NJB                **"brought many accusations against him"**

This is IMPERFECT TENSE meaning they accused Him again and again. This must have occurred after Pilate had spoken to Jesus privately (cf. v. 4). A list of some of the accusations is found in Luke 23:2.

**15:5 "Jesus made no further answer"** This may be a fulfillment of Isa. 53:7 (cf. 14:61; Matt. 26:63; 27:12; John 19:9).

▣ **"so Pilate was amazed"** Why was Pilate amazed?

1. Jesus spoke in private to him, but would not speak in the presence of His accusers.
2. The High Priest made so many charges against Him and they were so vehement.
3. Jesus did not act like most prisoners who vigorously defended themselves.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:6-15

**"Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. <sup>7</sup>The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. <sup>8</sup>The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. <sup>9</sup>Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' <sup>10</sup>For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. <sup>11</sup>But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead. <sup>12</sup>Answering again, Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' <sup>13</sup>They shouted back, 'Crucify Him!' <sup>14</sup>But Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify Him!' <sup>15</sup>Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified."**

**15:6 “the feast”** This refers to the Passover. Scholars have often debated the length of Jesus’ public ministry. The only reason church tradition affirms a three-year public ministry is because of the three Passovers mentioned in John’s Gospel. However, in John there is a mention of “the feast,” as here, which implies another Passover. I think Jesus may have had a four-year or possibly five or six-year public ministry. It is obvious the Gospel writers were not concerned with chronology per se, but theology. The Gospels are not western histories, but eastern theological accounts. They are neither biographies or autobiographies. They are a genre to themselves. Gospel writers, under inspiration, had the freedom to select, adapt, and rearrange the words and actions of Jesus to present Him to their target audiences. I do not believe they had the freedom to put words in His mouth; however, eyewitness material written down at a much later time, along with the theological purposes and differing target audiences, answers the questions about why the four Gospels differ.

▣ **“he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested”** This seems to have become an annual Roman tradition in Palestine of Jesus’ day. There is no historical corroboration for this except Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:9:3. Pilate was trying to get the crowd to feel sympathy for Jesus so that he could let Him go free (cf. Mark. 15:14; Luke 23:14-16; John 18:38-39; 19:4).

**15:7 “Barabbas”** This name is a combination of Bar = “son of” and Abbas = “father.” The non-canonical Gospel of Hebrews has Bar Rabbas, “son of Rabbi.” Several Greek MSS of Matt. 27:16-17 have “Jesus Barabbas,” which is an attempt at irony based on both being called “Jesus,” who was truly “the Son of the Father.”

▣ **“with the insurrectionists”** The man the crowd wanted released was the very type of person they were accusing Jesus of being. What irony!

**15:8 “The crowd”** Some think Barabbas’ friends were waiting for this annual opportunity. Others feel the crowd was made up not of pilgrims, but of the false witnesses and others involved in the night trials. These had nothing in common except that they both wanted Barabbas released, but for very different reasons.

The city was full of pilgrims, many from Galilee, but they would not have been up this early, nor at Pilate’s court.



<b>NASB, NJB</b>	<b>“went up”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“crying aloud”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“came”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“gathered”</b>

The Greek words “go up” (*anabainō*) and “cry aloud” (*anaboaō*) are spelled and pronounced similarly, which means they were easily confused by the ancient method of making copies of the NT by one scribe reading the text aloud and several others making copies. The Greek manuscript tradition is split:

1. “went up” AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE in MSS  $\aleph^*$ , B, and the Vulgate.
2. “cried aloud” AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE in MSS  $\aleph^2$ , A, C, W, and the Peshitta.

“Cried aloud” is not found in Mark in any other place, but “went up” is found nine times for:

1. things growing (4:7)
2. boarding a ship (6:51)
3. going up (15:8)

Probably NASB and NJB are correct.

**15:9** Mark, like Luke (i.e., in both his Gospel and Acts), writes to show that Christianity was no threat to the Roman authorities.

**15:10 “because of envy”** Pilate understood the motives of the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 27:18), but refused to act in justice!

Jealousy is surely a possible motive of the Jewish leadership, but I am surprised that their theological and political motives were not also obvious to Pilate (i.e., Luke 23:2). It is also possible that Pilate had heard of Jesus through spies or informants (or even his wife, cf. Matt. 27:19).

**15:12 “Him whom you call the King of the Jews”** John 19:15 records that this mob of Jews (i.e., insurrectionists and Jewish leaders) said “We have no King but Caesar.” What irony!

**15:13**

<b>NASB, NRSV,</b>	
<b>TEV, NJB</b>	<b>“they shouted back”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“they cried out again”</b>

The Greek term *palin* is interpreted as “back” by modern translations. Both “again” and “back” are standard translation options in Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 606. The context here demands “back.”

**15:14 “what evil has He done”** John’s Gospel parallels this statement of Pilate three times in 18:38; 19:4,6. Pilate tried to gain sympathy for Jesus and release Him (cf. John 18:38; 19:6,12), but this biased crowd would not have it!

**15:15**

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>“wishing to satisfy the crowd”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“wanting to gratify the crowd”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“wanted to please the crowd”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“anxious to placate the crowd”</b>

For Pilate civil order was more important than justice. These Jewish leaders had succeeded in intimidating Pilate (cf. John 19:12). Pilate had been accused of many things to the authorities in Syria and Rome. He could not afford more charges. They knew this and used it!

Several modern linguists note that the Greek words *hikanon poiēsai* are a Latin idiom (i.e., Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, p. 374; Moulton and Milligan, p. 302; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament Greek*, p. 192). This is significant because Mark has so many Latin words, phrases, and idioms, probably because it was written to witness to Romans.

▣ **“scourged”** This is a fulfillment of Isa. 53:5. Flogging was the standard Roman preliminary procedure for those being crucified. It was a horrible beating. A man was bent over and his hands tied to a low stake. Then two soldiers, one on each side, beat him with whips made out of nine leather straps with some hard objects attached to each of the strap’s ends. Often prisoners died just from this beating.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole *Roman* cohort. <sup>17</sup>They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him <sup>18</sup>and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” <sup>19</sup>They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. <sup>20</sup>After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His *own* garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

**15:16 “The soldiers took Him away”** These Roman soldiers (cf. Matt. 27:27) hated the Jews because of their exclusive attitudes toward Gentiles and they took their animosity out on Jesus. Luke 23:11 implies that Herod the Tetrarch’s soldiers also mocked Him as king.

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“into the palace (that is, the Praetorium)”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“into the hall called Praetorium”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters)”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“inside to the courtyard of the governor’s palace”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium”</b>

This referred to the Roman officials’ residence when they were in Jerusalem. This may have been the fortress Antonia, which was next to the Temple or more probably Herod the Great’s palace in Jerusalem.

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“the whole <i>Roman</i> cohort”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“the whole garrison”</b>
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>“the whole cohort”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“the rest of the company”</b>

The Greek term *speiran* (i.e., cohort) originally referred to something twisted together, like a strand or rope. It came to be used figuratively for a band of men working together for a purpose. Cohort is another Latin term. It was used of one-tenth of a legion, normally 600 men. But it could refer to many less (cf. John 18:3). The Roman military was structured by (1) legions, 6,000; (2) cohorts, 600; (3) maniples, 200; and (4) centuries, 100.

**15:17 “dressed Him up in purple”** Matthew 27:28 has a “scarlet robe” of a Roman cavalry officer. Purple was the symbol of royalty. Originally a Roman officer’s robe would have been scarlet, but in time it faded to a shade of purple. They were mocking Jesus as the supposed King of the Jews (cf. v. 18,20; John 19:2).

Luke 23:11 records that the Jewish soldiers of Herod the Tetrarch or Herod Antipas also mocked Jesus as King/Messiah by placing a kingly robe on Him.

▣ **“crown of thorns”** Traditionally this has been thought of as a mode of torture whereby the thorns were pressed into Jesus’ brow. However, it is quite possible that it was a radiant crown made of palm leaves, which was another way of mocking Jesus as a king (cf. Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:15-20). The Greek term “crown” (*stephanos*) was used of an athletic victory garland or a laurel wreath worn by the Emperor.

**15:19** This verse describes the mockery of the Roman soldiers.

1. “hail,” specialized greeting to a leader (v. 18)
2. “beating His head with a reed,” this probably was first put in Jesus’ hand as a mock scepter
3. “spitting on Him,” a cultural sign of contempt or mimicking a kiss (i.e., a type of salute)
4. “kneeling and bowing before Him,” another mock symbol of His kingship
5. a purple robe placed on His shoulders, symbolizing kingship

Numbers two through four are IMPERFECT TENSES, which mean repeated action in past time. Many of the soldiers did these actions again and again or possibly each soldier present did it.

**15:20 “they led Him out”** Jesus, as all condemned prisoners, had to carry His own cross beam to the place of crucifixion outside the city walls. They took the long way through the streets of Jerusalem so that all would see and fear Roman justice.

This leading of criminals outside the walls of Jerusalem to be killed may have been done out of respect for Jewish law (cf. Lev. 24:14 and Num. 15:35-36). The Romans did not want a riot during these crowded feast days.

▣ **“to crucify Him”** The Phoenicians invented crucifixion. Alexander the Great crucified 2,000 after the fall of Tyre. The Romans perfected the technique so that condemned criminals suffered several days before their death. This cruel torture was meant as a deterrent to crime. It could not be performed on a Roman citizen.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:21**

<sup>21</sup>**They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.**

**15:21 “pressed into service”** This is a Persian loan word used of official confiscation of property or conscription of workers for governmental use.



NASB	“a passer-by coming from the country”
NKJV	“as he was coming out of the country”
NRSV	“a passer-by, who was coming in from the country”
TEV	“who was coming into the city from the country”
NJB	“a passer-by. . .who was coming from the country”

Does this imply a person now living in Palestine or a visitor to the Passover? I think it refers to a pilgrim who was housed in the suburbs of Jerusalem who just happened to be walking by at the time. However, there were many from Cyrenaica (i.e., North Africa) who lived in Jerusalem. There was even a special synagogue for them (cf. Acts 6:9). His children are mentioned who apparently were known by the early church (not in Jerusalem, but in Rome).

▣ **“Simon of Cyrene”** Cyrenaica was a province of North Africa. Cyrene was its capital. However, the name Simon is a Jewish name. We learn from Acts that there were many Jews from this area (cf. Acts 2:10; 6:9; 11:20; 13:1). His racial identity is uncertain. There were black Jews from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba’s day (i.e., Ethiopia).

▣ **“the father of Alexander and Rufus”** Obviously this specific description implies that Simon and/or his children became well known in the early church. Since Mark is written to Romans possibly the Rufus in Rom. 16:13 is the same man.

▣ **“cross”** There are several possible shapes used by the Romans, T, X, t, or a scaffold holding several vertical beams. All of these shapes have been found by archaeological research as being used in first century Palestine.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:22-26**

<sup>22</sup>**Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. <sup>23</sup>They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. <sup>24</sup>And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves,**

casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. <sup>25</sup>It was the third hour when they crucified Him. <sup>26</sup>The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

**15:22 "Golgotha"** This is an Aramaic term. The term "calvary" is Latin for "skull." The terms do not refer to the full skull, but the forehead. The location is uncertain, but it was outside the old walls of Jerusalem, probably on a low, bald hill on a major thoroughfare into the holy city (cf. Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35-36; John 19:20).

**15:23 "They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh"** This is IMPERFECT TENSE meaning they tried several times. Talmudic tradition says that the women of Jerusalem did this as a ministry to condemned prisoners. It was in effect a strong drug to ease the pain and dull the mind.

▣ **"but He did not take it"** The reason is unknown.

**15:24 "crucified Him"** The Romans did not nail through the palms of the hand but through the wrists with the body supported mostly by ropes around the arms. The legs were slightly bent with the feet nailed to a small triangular box. This was done to cause a person to continually lift themselves up in order to breathe. There was also a small piece of wood, called the saddle, on which the person could sit and briefly rest their weight. Most crucified people died from asphyxiation. The person was suspended off the ground only high enough to get their feet about one foot above the ground.

▣ **"divided up His garments"** The Roman soldiers who crucified criminals got to keep their possessions as part of their pay.

▣ **"casting lots"** This was predicted in Ps. 22:18. This psalm describes Jesus' crucifixion (Christological typology). Jesus quotes the first line of this Psalm in Mark 15:34. Also Ps. 22:7-8 foreshadows the comments of those who passed by and mocked Jesus (cf. Mark 15:29).

**15:25 "the third hour"** In John 19:14 it says "the sixth hour." The Synoptic Gospels consistently use Jewish time, while John, often, but not exclusively, uses Roman time.

▣ **"they crucified Him"** The Gospel writers do not play on our emotions describing the gruesome physical steps that were involved. The theological issue is not how (although Deut. 21:23 is significant, cf. Gal. 3:13) He died, but who He is and why He died!

**15:26**

NASB, NRSV,

NJB

"the inscription. . .read"

NKJV

"the inscription. . .written above"

TEV

"the notice of the accusation against him said"

The information that this inscription was in three languages comes from John 19:20. The information that it was nailed over Jesus' head comes from Matt. 22:37.

The KJV and NKJV translate Mark 15:26 in such a way as to imply it clearly states "above," but the term "inscription" is repeated in the VERB, which means to engrave, inscribe, imprint, write on, but not "above."

▣ **"the charge read"** This small sign was called the *Titulus* by the Romans. It was usually black letters on a white background. This official charge was either (1) carried before the condemned or (2) hung around the neck of the condemned. At the place of crucifixion it was placed above Jesus' head on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:37). See *Manners and Customs of the Bible* by James M. Freeman, pp. 395-6.

▣ **"THE KING OF THE JEWS"** It is interesting to note the variety among the Gospels as to the exact wording of the charge placed over Jesus' head on the cross.

1. Matt. 27:37 – "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"
2. Mark 15:26 – "The King of the Jews"
3. Luke 23:38 – "This is the King of the Jews"
4. John 19:19 – "Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews"

Each one is different, but basically the same. This is true of most of the variety of historical details among the Gospels. Each writer recorded his memories (and sources) in slightly different ways, but they are still the same eyewitness account.

Pilate meant to irritate the Jewish leaders by putting the very title they feared on Jesus' cross (cf. v. 21-22).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:27-32

<sup>27</sup>They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. <sup>28</sup>[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] <sup>29</sup>Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>31</sup>In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and

saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. <sup>32</sup>"Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

**15:27 "two robbers with Him"** This term meant "robbers" or "insurrectionists." This is a specific fulfillment of Isa. 53:12.

Psalms 22 and Isa. 52:13-53:12 are specific in some of their details, but not all! Reading these types of Messianic prophecies is very difficult because only some of the details apply to Jesus' situation. Others must have been (1) symbolic; (2) poetic; or (3) concerned only the original historical situation. It is only through the inspiration of NT authors that this type of Christological typology is valid. Modern believers are led by the Spirit when they read the Bible (i.e., illumination), but we disagree on the details, which shows that inspiration is superior to illumination.

Typology has been so abused by post-NT writers that I refuse to accept this type of biblical interpretation except when recorded by NT authors. We cannot reproduce the hermeneutical procedures of inspired biblical writers. We must rely on understanding what those original, inspired authors were saying to their day (see Introductory Article, "Good Bible Reading"). We must then apply these truths to our cultural situation.

**15:28** This verse is omitted by the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts  $\aleph$ , A, B, C, and D. It is left out of the NRSV, TEV, NJB, and NIV translations. It was apparently added as a marginal note by an ancient scribe from Luke 22:37. It is not part of the original text of Mark. It is uncharacteristic for Mark, writing to Gentiles, to include an OT quote (i.e., v. 28 is an allusion to Isa. 53:12). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the omission an "A" rating (certain).

**15:29 "Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him"** Probably in keeping with the purpose and procedures of Roman crucifixion, the site of execution was located on a major road entering Jerusalem.

These passers by may have been fulfilling the prophecy of Ps. 22:6-8,12-13,16-17.

▣ **"Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple"** These mockers may be those false accusers who were at the night trial of the Sanhedrin (cf. 14:58).

**15:30** This comment is a continuing mockery (cf. vv. 31-32) of Jesus' powers. They still wanted a miraculous sign, even at this late date. They claimed they would yet believe in Him (cf. v. 32).

**15:31 "He saved others"** The term "saved" is used in its OT sense of physical deliverance. These leaders could not deny Jesus' miracles, but attributed His power to Satan (cf. 3:22). The people of Jerusalem were well aware that Jesus had raised Lazarus (cf. John 11).

**15:32 "Christ, the King of Israel"** This is the chief priests' mockery of Pilate's title, "King of the Jews," which was nailed above Jesus' head. This is sarcasm, not affirmation!

This surely fits into the ridicule foreshadowed in Ps. 22:6-8,12-13,16.

▣ **"Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him"** It is only in Luke 23:35-43 that the account of the repentant criminal is recorded.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:33-39

<sup>33</sup>When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup>At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" <sup>35</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they *began* saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." <sup>36</sup>Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." <sup>37</sup>And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. <sup>38</sup>And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

**15:33 "the sixth hour"** If Jewish time is used, this would be twelve o'clock noon. See note at 15:1.

▣ **"darkness fell over the whole land"** This is one of the OT judgment signs, either in a covenantal sense (i.e., one of the Egyptian plagues, cf. Exod. 10:21; Deut. 28:28-29) or an apocalyptic sense (cf. Joel 2:2; Amos 8:9-10; Zeph. 1:15). This was a symbol of God the Father taking His presence away from His Son, who bore the sin of all humanity. This is what Jesus feared most in Gethsemane (symbolized by "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" in v. 34). Jesus became a sin offering

and bore the sin of all the world (cf. II Cor. 5:21). He experienced personal separation from the Father. Darkness was a physical symbol of God the Father turning away from His Son.

**15:34 “at the ninth hour”** If Jewish time is used, this was three o’clock in the afternoon.

▣ **“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME”** This is a quote from Ps. 22:1. Since the Jewish scrolls had no chapter and verse divisions (all of which were added to Bible texts in the middle ages), it seems that by quoting the first verse, Jesus wanted to highlight the entire Psalm.

There is a difference of scholarly opinion on how this phrase should be translated

1. The Septuagint has “O God, My God, attend to me” (which happens in the Psalms)
2. The Peshitta (translated by George M. Lamsa) has
  - a. Ps. 22:1, “My God, my God, why hast thou let me live?”
  - b. Mark 15:34, “My God, my God, for this I was spared!”
3. The Jewish Publication Society of America has, Ps. 22:1 as “My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?”
4. Codex Bezae (fifth century) has “My God, my God, why have you reviled me?” For a full discussion of the Gnostic problems connected to this verse see Bart D. Ehrman’s *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Affect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, pp. 143-145.

Jesus was experiencing the last full measure of human sin—separation from fellowship with the Father (cf. Isa. 54:2). Humans were created for fellowship with God; without it we can never be whole!

**15:34,35 “He is calling for Elijah”** Jesus and the Apostles (and all Jews in Palestine of the first century) spoke Aramaic. Mark, writing to Romans, always translates these Aramaic phrases, which Peter remembered so well. In Aramaic Elijah is Elia. The Aramaic phrase is also recorded in Matt. 27:46. This is the most startling phrase Jesus cried from the cross. He felt alienated from the Father. Elijah was traditionally the prophet who would come in times of trouble and before the Messiah (cf. Mal. 3:1-6; 4:4-6), therefore, the bystanders thought Jesus was praying for him to come help Him.

One of my favorite authors is F. F. Bruce. In his book *Answers to Questions*, p. 65, he mentions an article in the Palestine Exploration Quarterly, Jan. - April, 1951, by Alfred Guillaume, which notes that the suffix “my” is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls as \_\_\_iya. When Jesus said, “My God,” the form would be *Eliya*, which is pronounced very close to Elijah’s name. This may explain why the bystanders misunderstood Jesus’ words.

**15:36 “with sour wine”** This was the cheap wine that the populace and soldiers drank. This may relate to Ps. 22:15. Jesus was so dry that He needed a drink to help Him speak the last few words from the cross (cf. John 19:28-30).

▣ **“put it on a reed”** The reed was used to reach His mouth. Giving a drink to crucified persons was not an act of compassion, but a way to prolong life and agony.

▣ **“Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down”** This was not from compassion, but the desire to see a sign (cf. Matt. 27:47-48).

**15:37 “a loud cry”** John 19:30 tells us He said, “It is finished!” This word has been found written across business documents in the Koine Greek papyri from Egypt. It apparently was a commercial term that meant “paid in full” (i.e., Isaiah 53).

**15:38 “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”** There were two curtains to the inner shrine of the Temple, one in the Holy Place and a second before the Holy of Holies. If the second was ripped no one would have seen it except the priests, unless the first one was regularly pulled back and tied to the sides. These curtains are described in Exod. 26:31-37. In Jesus’ day, in Herod’s remodeled Temple, this curtain was 60’ by 30’ and about 4” thick! If the outer one was ripped all worshipers in the different outer courts would have seen it. This seems to show that the way to intimate fellowship with God has been reestablished by God at Christ’s death (cf. Gen. 3:15; Exod. 26:31-35). In Matt. 27:51-53 other miracles are recorded as attesting signs.

**15:39 “a centurion”** This was the rank of a low-level Roman military officer. It literally means “a leader of one hundred.” These men were the backbone of the Roman army. Cornelius in Acts 10 is also a centurion. Mark is written to evangelize Romans!

▣ **“Truly this man was the Son of God”** This is literally “this man was a son of God.” However the absence of the article does not automatically mean it is not definite (cf. Matt. 4:3,6; 14:33; 27:43; and Luke 4:3,9). This was a hardened Roman soldier. He had seen many men die (cf. Matt. 27:54). This may be “the focal passage” of Mark because this Gospel was specifically written to Romans. It has many Latin words and very few OT quotes. Also Jewish customs and Aramaic phrases are translated and explained. Here is a Roman centurion professing faith in a crucified Jewish insurrectionist!

It is possibly theologically purposeful that passers by, chief priests, and even fellow prisoners mock Jesus, but the Roman centurion responds in affirmation and awe!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:40-41**

<sup>40</sup>There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup>When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

**15:40 “There were also *some* women looking on from a distance”** The apostolic group was ministered to both financially and physically by several women (i.e., cooking, washing, etc., cf. v. 41; Matt. 27:55; Luke 8:3).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

#### **I. The Old Testament**

##### **A. Culturally women were considered property**

1. included in list of property (Exodus 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exodus 21:7-11)
3. women's vows annulable by socially responsible male (Numbers 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deuteronomy 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

##### **B. Practically there was a mutuality**

1. male and female made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Leviticus 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Numbers 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deuteronomy 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chronicles 25:5-6)
9. sons and daughters will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

##### **C. Women were in leadership roles**

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20-21 also note Micah 6:4)
2. women gifted by God to weave material for the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Judges 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah invoked to read and interpret the newly-found “Book of the Law” (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Queen Esther, a godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

#### **II. The New Testament**

##### **A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).**

##### **B. Women in leadership roles**

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four virgin daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)



### III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

- A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths, which apply only to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?
1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.
  2. We must deal with the obviously historically-conditioned inspired texts.
    - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel (cf. Acts 15; Gal. 3)
    - b. first century Judaism
    - c. Paul's obviously historically-conditioned statements in I Corinthians
      - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome (I Cor. 6)
      - (2) remaining a slave (I Cor. 7:20-24)
      - (3) celibacy (I Cor. 7:1-35)
      - (4) virgins (I Cor. 7:36-38)
      - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (I Cor. 8; 10:23-33)
      - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11)
  3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in human words, addressed to a particular culture at a particular time.
- B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation. But then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Rom. 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35 he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches there were problems with women exercising their newly-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*), which could have caused difficulty for the church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if articulate, trained women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

#### C. Suggestions for further reading

*How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)

*Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* by Gordon Fee

*Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

▣ **“Mary Magdalene”** Magdala was a small city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, three miles north of Tiberias. Mary followed Jesus from Galilee after He had delivered her from several demons (cf. Luke 8:2). She has unfairly been labeled as a prostitute but there is no NT evidence of this. See Special Topic at 16:1.

▣ **“Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses”** In Matt. 27:56 she is called “the mother of James and Joseph.” In Matt. 28:1 she is called “the other Mary.” The real question is, to whom was she married? In John 19:25 possibly she was married to Clopas, yet her son James, was said to be the “son of Alphaeus” (cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). See Special Topic at 16:1.

▣ **“Salome”** This was the mother of James and John, who were part of the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples, and the wife of Zebedee (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1-2). See Special Topic: The Women Who Followed Jesus at 16:1.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:42-47**

<sup>42</sup>When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, <sup>43</sup>Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup>Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. <sup>45</sup>And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup>Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.

**15:42 “When evening had already come”** Mark is the only Gospel that mentions this. Exodus 12:6 has “evenings” as if there were two: (1) 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and (2) 6:00 p.m. and later. Context implies it must have been after 3:00 p.m. (the time of the evening sacrifice), but before 6:00 p.m. (the start of the Passover Sabbath).

▣ **“the preparation day”** This refers to the day everything had to be made ready for the high holy Sabbath of Passover week (i.e., Passover and Unleavened Bread was an eight-day feast, therefore, it had two Sabbaths), not the Passover meal itself.

**15:43 “Joseph of Arimathea”** He seems to have been a secret disciple, along with Nicodemus (cf. Matt. 27:57; John 12:42). However, after Jesus’ death he went publicly to ask Pilate for Jesus’ body (cf. John 19:38). It was dangerous to be identified as a friend of a crucified insurrectionist.

As an orthodox Jew of his day Joseph would have made himself ceremonially unclean to observe the Passover Sabbath by:

1. going into a Gentile house
2. touching a dead body

However, he may have been attempting to remove the curse of Deut. 21:22-23. Usually the Romans let the bodies of the crucified remain unburied at the place of death, but because the Jews were so squeamish about unburied bodies, the Romans allowed them to bury their dead, but usually not immediately.

The term Arimathea means “height” and apparently is another name for the city of Ramah, which was five miles northeast of Jerusalem.

▣ **“prominent member of the Council”** Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, as was Nicodemus. See Special Topic: Sanhedrin at 12:13.

▣ **“waiting for the kingdom of God”** Joseph was a religious man (cf. Matt. 27:58). The Kingdom of God was a common Jewish expectation among Pharisees and the common people. Jesus often preached on this subject. It was the subject of His first and last sermons and the focus of His parables. See Special Topic at 1:15.

In what sense Joseph was waiting for the kingdom is uncertain. How could he be a disciple and not know the kingdom had come? Perhaps he was still expecting an earthly kingdom (like the disciples, cf. Acts 1:6).

▣ **“went in before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus”** This would have made him ceremonially unclean to participate in the high Sabbath of Passover week. This would also have identified him with Jesus, a crucified insurrectionist. This was a bold and decisive act.

▣ **“asked for the body”** Normally the Romans left the bodies on the cross to decay, as a deterrent to rebellion. These bodies were the property of Rome. They were usually not given back to the families for proper burial, which was especially important to Jews. This was a special, unusual request. It was granted because of the Jewish sensibilities about dead bodies ceremonially polluting the land especially during the Passover season.

**15:44 “Pilate wondered if He was dead at this time”** Crucifixion was a very slow painful death. Often it took several days. The Roman soldiers gave the victims water or wine from time to time, not out of mercy, but to prolong their death. However, this time the condemned had to die quickly because of the upcoming Passover Sabbath, so the soldiers broke the two criminals’ legs (cf. John 19:31ff). This was so that they could not push up on their legs to breathe properly. They would have died quickly after this. Jesus, however, was already dead, so His legs were not broken. This fulfills prophecy (cf. John 19:36, quoting from Exod. 12:46. See hermeneutical comment at 15:27).

“If” is not a marker for a CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, but an indirect question. Pilate was amazed Jesus had died so quickly, therefore, he asked his attendants this indirect question.

**15:45 “body”** The Greek word is not *soma*, but *ptōma*, which means corpse. Jesus was dead!

**15:46 “Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth”** Nicodemus was also there (cf. John 19:39-40). They quickly prepared Jesus’ body (i.e., because of the rapid approach of the Sabbath at 6 p.m.) according to Jewish tradition. The Jews did not practice embalming as the Egyptians did, but they had a set procedure involving linen wraps and spices.

▣ **“laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock”** This fulfills the specific prophecy of Isa. 53:9. Matt. 27:57-60 tells us it was Joseph’s personal tomb.

▣ **“hewn out in the rock”** Jesus was not buried in the ground, but in Joseph’s family crypt. It was hollowed out of a rock cliff and would have included several burial slabs. There were many of these in the Jerusalem area.

▣ **“stone”** This large hewn round slab of rock was shaped like a grinding stone. These graves were regularly robbed so they were sealed with a heavy stone. The size of the stone showed it was a rich man’s grave.

**15:47 “were looking on to see where He was laid”** This term means “to view with interest and attention.” They wanted to make sure that Jesus was properly prepared for burial. However, this also provided the needed two witnesses (i.e., Deut. 17:6; 19:15) to confirm a legal testimony. Jesus was dead and they did not go to the wrong tomb!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who arrested Jesus? (i.e., the make-up of the crowd)
2. How was the trial of Jesus improper, even by Jewish standards?
3. Were there one or two servant girls in verses 66-69?
4. Why was Peter so nervous in the courtyard?
5. Read the accounts of the trials in all four Gospels and make your own chronological list.
6. Describe if possible, Pilate’s motivation in all this?
7. How can we explain the crowd’s behavior?
8. Why did the soldiers make sport of Jesus? How many different groups made fun of Him?
9. List the different ways they mocked Jesus.
10. Where was Jesus crucified?
11. Why did Jesus feel abandoned by the Father (cf. v. 34)?
12. Why is v. 39 one of the key verses in Mark’s Gospel?
13. Why did Joseph want Jesus buried quickly?

# MARK 16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Resurrection	He Is Risen	The First Easter	The Resurrection	The Empty Tomb. The Angel's Message
16:1-8	16:1-8	16:1-8	16:1-5	16:1-2
			16:6-7	16:3-8
			16:8	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. v) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CANONICITY OF VERSES 9-20

- A. I do not believe verses 9-20 are original to the Gospel of Mark. They are not inspired and should not be included in the New Testament.
- B. Everything past verse 8 is absent from the ancient uncial Greek manuscripts of
  1. Sinaiticus, known by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet א. This manuscript includes the whole NT and is from the fourth century. It was found at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai
  2. Vaticanus, known by the Greek letter B. This manuscript includes the whole NT except Revelation and is also from the fourth century.  
It was found in modern times in the Vatican library in Rome.
- C. The third ancient uncial witness to the Greek New Testament, Alexandrinus, is known by the Greek letter A. This manuscript includes the whole NT and is from the fifth century. It is from Alexandria, Egypt. It does include an ending to Mark (the one found in the Textus Receptus and KJV). This long ending first appeared in Irenaeus' (A.D. 120-202) *Against Heresies* III:10:5; and Titian's (A.D.110-172) compilation of the four Gospels called The Diatessaron. However, Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria never quote or allude to these verses even one time. This tells me that the ending was not original even in Alexandrinus, which was from the same city. The verses are included in MS C, which is also from Alexandria sometime in the fifth century.
- D. Eusebius (A.D.275-340), an early church historian of the fourth century, said "the most accurate copies" end at v. 8.

- E. Jerome (A.D. 347-420), the translator of the Latin Vulgate, said that almost all Greek manuscripts lack an ending after verse 8.
- F. Verses 9-20 contain 14-17 words that are not used previously or are used differently in the Gospel of Mark. There is also a marked change of style and syntax. The obviously non-biblical signs of v. 18 affirm the uninspired nature of these additional verses.
- G. Manuscripts from Egypt (Coptic) have four different endings after verse 8. Some Greek manuscripts include the long ending (i.e., vv. 9-20) and then the short ending or the short ending and then the long ending or one of the other endings in combination.
  - 1. Here is one short ending from a Coptic manuscript: "And all things which He commanded Peter and those who were His, they finished telling, and after this Jesus manifested Himself to them; and from the rising of the sun as far as the West, He sent them to preach eternal salvation by the Holy Gospel which is incorruptible."
  - 2. Here is another short ending. "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." This is called "the short ending" and is found in the old Latin manuscript K.
- H. The major problem is that the Gospel of Mark seems to end so abruptly in verse 8. There are many theories, but no one knows for certain why Mark ends so abruptly on a note of fear.
- I. There is a good explanation of this textual problem in Bruce M. Metzger's book *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies, pp. 122-126, or Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Nida's book *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, published by the United Bible Societies, pp. 517-522.
- J. For a brief discussion of textual criticism see Appendix Two at the end of this commentary.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-8

<sup>1</sup>When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. <sup>3</sup>They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup>Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. <sup>5</sup>Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. <sup>6</sup>And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. <sup>7</sup>"But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" <sup>8</sup>They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

**16:1 "When the Sabbath was over"** The ancient Israelites started their days at twilight (i.e., evenings), following Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31. However, the Romans (and Greeks) had adopted a Babylonian method of dividing the day and night into twelve divisions. These divisions were not of equal length because of seasonal changes in the length of light/dark periods. Mark 15 uses several of these time markers (i.e., third hour, v. 25; sixth hour, v. 33; ninth hour, v. 34).

This phrase appears to refer to the ancient Israelite method and would, therefore, be 6 p.m. Friday until 6 p.m. Saturday for the Sabbath.

▣ **"Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome"** See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS

- A. The first mention of the women followers of Jesus who helped Him and the Apostolic band is Luke 8:1-3.
  - 1. Mary, who was called Magdalene (v. 2)
    - a. Matt. 27:56,61; 28:1
    - b. Mark 15:40,47; 16:1,9
    - c. Luke 8:2; 24:10

- d. John 19:25; 20:1,11,16,18
2. Joanna, the wife of Chuza (Herod's servant, v. 3) is listed also in Luke 24:10
3. Susanna (v. 3)
4. "and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means" (v. 3)
- B. A group of women are mentioned as being present at the crucifixion
  1. Matthew's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (27:56)
    - b. Mary the mother of James and Josephus (27:56)
    - c. the mother of the sons of Zebedee (27:56)
  2. Mark's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (25:40)
    - b. Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses (15:40)
    - c. Salome (15:40)
  3. Luke says only, "the women who accompanied Him from Galilee" (23:49)
  4. John's list
    - a. Mary, Jesus' mother (19:25)
    - b. His mother's sister (19:25)
    - c. Mary of Clopas [KJ Cleophas, this could mean wife of Clopas or daughter of Clopas] (19:25)
    - d. Mary Magdalene (19:25)
- C. A group of women is mentioned observing the place of Jesus' burial
  1. Matthew's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (27:61)
    - b. the other Mary (27:61)
  2. Mark's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (15:47)
    - b. Mary the mother of Joses (15:47)
  3. Luke says only, "the women who had come with Him out of Galilee" (23:55)
  4. John has no record of the women seeing the tomb
- D. A group of women came to the tomb early Sunday morning
  1. Matthew's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (28:1)
    - b. the other Mary (28:1)
  2. Mark's list
    - a. Mary Magdalene (16:1)
    - b. Mary the mother of James (16:1)
    - c. Salome (16:1)
  3. Luke's list
    - a. "they came to the tomb" (24:1-5,24)
      - (1) Mary Magdalene (24:10)
      - (2) Joanna (24:10)
      - (3) Mary the mother of James (24:10)
  4. John lists only Mary Magdalene (20:1,11)
- E. The women are mentioned as being present in the upper room (Acts 1:14)
  1. "the women" (1:14)
  2. Mary the mother of Jesus (1:14)
- F. The exact relationship between the different women in these different lists is uncertain. Mary Magdalene obviously has a predominate role. A good article on "women" in Jesus' life and ministry is found in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* published by IVP, pp. 880-886.

▣ **“brought spices. . .anoint Him”** Although these women had seen Joseph and Nicodemus prepare and place the body of Jesus in a tomb, apparently because of the time limitations (i.e., between 3 - 6 p.m.) something of the normal Jewish burial procedures may have been left out (possibly the aromatic candles or some particular type of spices), and these women were going to properly finish the traditional procedures.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL SPICES**

- A. Myrrh, a fragrant gum from Arabian trees
  - 1. This spice is mentioned twelve times in the OT, mostly in wisdom literature as a perfume
  - 2. It was one of the gifts brought by the Magi to baby Jesus (cf. Matt. 2:11)
  - 3. Its symbolism is striking
    - a. used in “holy anointing oil” (Exod. 30:23-25)
    - b. used as a gift for a king (Matt. 2:11)
    - c. used to anoint Jesus at His burial (cf. John 19:39 and symbolically in John 11:2). This was according to Jewish customs described in the Talmud (i.e., Berakhoth 53a).
- B. Aloes, a fragrant type of wood
  - 1. connected to fragrant perfume (cf. Num. 24:6; Ps. 45:8; Pro. 7:17; Song of Songs 4:14)
  - 2. it was used, mixed with myrrh, by the Egyptians as part of the embalming process
  - 3. Nicodemus brought a large amount of this to Jesus’ burial and anointed Him with it (cf. John 19:39). This was according to Jewish customs described in the Talmud (i.e., Betsah 6a).

**16:2 “Very early on the first day of the week. . .when the sun had risen”** All the Gospels record a slightly different time.

- 1. Matthew 28:1 has “at dawn”
- 2. Luke 24:1 has “at early dawn”
- 3. John 20:1 “while it was still dark”

Apparently these women left their home while it was still dark, but by the time they arrived (possibly they had to buy the spices) at the tomb it was already light.

**16:3 “They were saying to one another”** This is an IMPERFECT TENSE. They kept worrying about and asking each other over and over again as they walked to the tomb.

▣ **“Who will roll away the stone”** They were already well on their way with the spices before they thought of the large stone which sealed the tomb. Mark records nothing of the guard and the seal of Matt. 27:62-66.

This stone was round and shaped to fit into a sloping groove dug just in front of the rock vault’s opening. It was relatively easy to roll into the trench, but very difficult to remove.

**16:4 “Looking up”** Apparently they were very downcast, looking at the ground in mourning.

▣ **“the stone had been rolled away”** From Matt. 28:2 it seems that the stone was knocked out of its groove by an earthquake (caused by an angel, cf. Luke 24:4; John 20:12) and it was lying on its side.

▣ **“although it was extremely large”** Grave robbing was a common occurrence because of the value of the spices and other burial objects. The location and type of the vault as well as the size of the stone would show it was a rich man’s tomb (cf. Isa. 53:9).

**16:5 “Entering the tomb”** John 20:11 has Mary outside the tomb looking in, but Luke 24:3 confirms that, at least at some point, the women went in.

▣ **“they saw a young man sitting at the right”** Normally it is Matthew that has two—two Gerasene demoniacs, two blind men in Jericho, etc.—but here it is Luke and John that have two angels while Mark and Matthew only have one.

In the Bible angels are usually depicted as males, except in Zechariah 5:9-10.

▣ **“wearing a white robe”** A much fuller account of his clothing is found in Matt. 28:3 (cf. Luke 24:4 has “in dazzling apparel”).

**16:6 “Do not be amazed”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process. Humans are always awed and frightened at the physical manifestations of the spiritual realm.

▣ **“Jesus the Nazarene”** See fuller note at 14:67.

▣ **“who has been crucified”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (cf. Matt. 28:5). This has the DEFINITE ARTICLE and may be a title, “the Crucified One” (cf. I Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Gal. 3:1). When we see Jesus He will still have the marks of the crucifixion, which have become a badge of honor and glory (cf. I Cor. 15:4 and Rev. 5:12). Jesus is the only Person of the Trinity with a physical body.

▣ **“He has risen”** The resurrection is the central pillar of the Christian faith (cf. I Cor. 15). This shows God’s approval of Jesus’ life and sacrifice. This is a recurrent theme of Peter (cf. Acts 2:24-28,32, 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; I Pet. 1:13, 3:18,21, and Paul, Acts 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24, 8:11; 10:9; II Cor. 4:14). This is confirmation of the Father’s acceptance of the Son’s substitutionary death (cf. I Cor. 15). Theologically all three persons of the Trinity were active in Christ’s resurrection: the Father (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34; 17:31); the Spirit (Rom. 8:11); and the Son (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18). See Special Topic: The Resurrection at 8:31.

▣ **“behold here is the place where they laid Him”** This refers to one of several rock ledges in Joseph’s tomb. John 20:6-7 describes this burial place and how the linen burial cloths were lying.

**16:7 “But go, tell His disciples and Peter”** Why is Peter singled out? How thoughtful and tender our Lord (through the angel), that He would single out the backslidden and hurting Peter! Peter remembers!

▣ **“He is going ahead of you to Galilee”** Jesus had prearranged a meeting with His disciples in Galilee after His resurrection. The disciples did not clearly understand the theological implications of this event (cf. 14:28; Matt. 28:32; 28:7,10; John 21; I Cor. 15:6). I think this was the time and place of the Great Commission.

**16:8 “for trembling and astonishment had gripped them”** Matthew 28:8 adds with “great joy.”

▣ **“they said nothing to anyone”** Was this temporary or did they not obey the angel’s message of v. 7? John 20:1-10 gives an account of Mary of Magdala reporting to the disciples about the grave being empty, but no angel’s message!

▣ **“for they were afraid”** This Gospel ends so abruptly and on such a negative note that apparently ancient scribes tried to add some type of summary ending to it.

**16:9-20** I am committed to inspired Apostolic writings as the true word of God, the only source for faith and practice. However, these verses are not inspired, possibly even heretical (drinking poison, handling snakes). I refuse to comment on them! For a full discussion of the textual problem see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, pp. 122-126.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are there differences between the four Gospel accounts?
2. Why does Mark’s Gospel end on such a negative note?
3. Why is the resurrection the central pillar of Christian faith?



# INTRODUCTION TO I PETER

## AUTHORSHIP

- A. Internal evidence for the Apostle Peter's authorship
  - 1. specifically stated in 1:1
  - 2. allusions to the words and life experiences of Jesus and the Twelve
    - a. examples taken from E. G. Selwyn's *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 1946
      - (1) 1:3 – John 21:27
      - (2) 1:7-9 – Luke 22:31; Mark 8:29
      - (3) 1:10-12 – Luke 24:25ff; Acts 15:14ff
      - (4) 3:15 – Mark 14:29,71
      - (5) 5:2 – John 21:15ff
    - b. examples taken from Alan Stibbbs' *The First Epistle General of Peter*, 1971
      - (1) 1:16 – Matt. 5:48
      - (2) 1:17 – Matt. 22:16
      - (3) 1:18 – Mark 10:45
      - (4) 1:22 – John 15:12
      - (5) 2:4 – Matt. 21:42ff
      - (6) 2:19 – Luke 6:32; Matt. 5:39
      - (7) 3:9 – Matt. 5:39
      - (8) 3:14 – Matt. 5:10
      - (9) 3:16 – Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28
      - (10) 3:20 – Matt. 24:37-38
      - (11) 4:11 – Matt. 5:16
      - (12) 4:13 – Matt. 5:10ff
      - (13) 4:18 – Matt. 24:22
      - (14) 5:3 – Matt. 20:25
      - (15) 5:7 – Matt. 6:25ff
  - 3. words and phrases similar to Peter's sermons in Acts
    - a. 1:20 – Acts 2:23
    - b. 2:7-8 – Acts 4:10-11
    - c. 2:24 – Acts 5:30; 10:39 (esp. use of the Greek term *xylon* for cross)
    - d. 4:5 – Acts 10:45
  - 4. contemporary first century missionary comparisons
    - a. Silvanus (Silas) – 5:12
    - b. Mark (John Mark) – 5:13
- B. External evidence for the Apostle Peter's authorship
  - 1. accepted early and widely by the early church
    - a. similar phrasing, possibly quotes, by Clement of Rome in his *Letter to Corinthians* (A.D. 95)
    - c. similar phrasing, possibly quotes, in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (A.D. 130)
    - d. alluded to by Papias, the Bishop of Hieropolis (A.D. 140) in a quote from Eusebius' *His. Eccl.*
    - e. quoted by Polycarp in his *Epistle to the Philippians* 8:1, but he does not mention I Peter by name (Polycarp died in A.D. 155)
    - f. quoted by Irenaeus (A.D. 140-203)
    - g. quoted by Origen (A.D. 185-253). Origen believed that I Pet. 5:13, where Peter calls Mark "my son" means he wrote Peter's Gospel.
    - h. quoted by Tertullian (A.D. 150-222)
- C. Reasons for questioning the Apostle Peter's authorship
  - 1. it is not listed in the Muratorian Fragment, a list of canonical books compiled in Rome between A.D. 180 and 200
  - 2. the Greek is good, polished Koine Greek, which is surprising from an "uneducated" (*a grammatos*, cf. Acts 4:13) Galilean fisherman
  - 3. it sounds so much like Paul's writings in Romans and Ephesians

4. its description of persecution described in I Peter better fits a later date
    - a. Domitian (A.D. 81-96)
    - b. Trajan (A.D. 98-117)
- D. Possible answers to modern scholarship concerns
1. The Muratorian Fragment is damaged and missing at least one line of text (cf. B. F. Westcott's *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. p. 289).
  2. Peter was not uneducated (cf. Acts 4:13), but merely untrained in a recognized rabbinical school. Apparently most Jews in Galilee were bilingual from birth. The other major issue in this discussion is Peter's use of a scribe. The wording of I Pet. 5:12 suggests he may have used Silvanus (Silas).
  3. Both Peter and Paul often quoted liturgical or training material (catechism documents) common in the early church. They also had some contact with each other through the years (i.e., Acts, Gal. and II Pet. 3:15-16).  
For me the most probable reason for the similarity between Peter and Paul's writing can be explained by Peter's use of Paul's missionary companion Silas (Silvanus) as a scribe.
  4. I Peter does not necessarily reflect an Empire-wide persecution. Peter's affirmation of believers needing to be subject to government (cf. 2:13-17) would be unusual in a day of official Empire-wide persecution.  
Nero's (A.D. 54-68) growing mental illness (e.g. grandiose claims) encouraged local emperor cults, especially in Asia Minor, to instigate local persecutions. I Peter fits Nero's day better than Domitian's (A.D. 81-96) or Trajan's day (A.D. 98-117). It is even possible that some of the persecution is coming from Jewish groups as well as local governmental officials or emperor cults.
- E. There is nothing in I Peter itself which demands a later period or author.

## DATE

- A. The date is obviously related to authorship.
- B. Tradition links Peter's and Paul's deaths in Rome under Nero, probably A.D. 65. If so, then I Peter had to have been written about A.D. 63-64.
- C. A mid-first century date is probable if I Peter is alluded to by Clement of Rome (A.D. 95).
- D. A. T. Robertson believes Peter died in A.D. 67-68 and wrote I Peter in A.D. 65-66. I think he died in A.D. 64-65 and wrote just before this.

## RECIPIENTS

- A. Typical of first century letters, the recipients are noted in 1:1 as "those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." These Roman provinces (assuming Galatia is northern ethnic Galatia) are located in northern modern Turkey. These areas are apparently places that Paul did not evangelize (cf. Acts 16:6) nor did Peter (cf. 1:12). Possibly these churches originated from Jewish converts who returned home after Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:9-11).
- B. Although these churches may have originally been started by Jewish believers at the time of Peter's writing, they were mostly Gentile
  1. formerly ignorant of God (1:14)
  2. futile ways of life inherited from their forefathers (1:18)
  3. now God's people (2:9-10, a play on Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23)
  4. among the Gentiles (2:12)
  5. lists of Gentile vices (4:3-4)
- C. The book does contain Jewish elements
  1. the use of the terms "aliens" and "diaspora" reflect a Jewish setting (cf. John 7:35; Acts 7:6)
  2. the use of OT Scriptures
    - a. Exodus 19 (cf. 2:5,9)
    - b. Isaiah 53 (cf. 1:19; 2:22,24,25)

However, these examples do not necessarily reflect a Jewish church, but

1. the transfer of OT titles from Israel to the church (i.e., “a kingdom of priests”)
    - a. 2:5
    - b. 2:9
  2. a church training document (i.e., catechism materials for new believers), which employed OT Messianic texts
    - a. 1:19 – Isaiah 53:7 (i.e., Lamb)
    - b. 2:22 – Isaiah 53:5
    - c. 2:24 – Isaiah 53:4,5,11,12
    - d. 2:25 – Isaiah 53:6
- D. Although Peter was called specifically to minister to Jews (cf. Gal. 2:8), he, like Paul, worked with both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Acts 10). Cornelius’ conversion showed Peter the radical inclusiveness of the gospel! I Peter reflects this new realization.

## PURPOSE

- A. I Peter has both a doctrinal and practical aspect. However, as Paul divided his letters into a beginning section on doctrine and a concluding section on application, Peter merges the two. His book is much more difficult to outline. In many ways it reflects a sermon more than a letter.
- B. The major issue discussed is suffering and persecution. This is done in two ways.
1. Jesus is presented as the ultimate example of suffering and rejection (cf. 1:11; 2:21,23; 3:18; 4:1,13; 5:1).
  2. Jesus’ followers are called on to emulate His pattern and attitude (cf. 1:6-7; 2:19; 3:13-17; 4:1,12-19; 5:9-10).
- C. In light of the suffering and persecutions so common in the early years of Christianity, it is not surprising how often the Second Coming is mentioned. This book, like most NT writings, is thoroughly eschatological.

## GENRE

- A. This book has a typical first century Greco-Roman opening and close
1. 1:1-2
    - a. author
    - b. recipients
    - c. prayer
  2. 5:12-14
    - a. closing greetings
      - (1) from whom
      - (2) to whom
    - b. prayer
- B. The main body of the letter resembles a sermon more than a letter. Some have assumed it was
1. first a sermon
  2. first a baptismal liturgy
  3. first pieces of early church catechism material combined
- C. The letter seems to close at 4:11 with a doxology, but no Greek manuscript stops at this point. It is possible that 4:12-5:11 is a purposeful summary of the entire letter.
- D. I personally believe that I Peter functions as a cyclical letter to churches which Peter did not personally start, much like Paul’s Colossians (sent to Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, cf. Col. 4:13), but also a general encouragement to believers to watch out for coming problems, much like Paul’s Galatian and Ephesian letters.
- This cyclical genre explains the lack of a personal opening and closing to the letter. It also explains the lack of specific examples of persecution.

## CANONIZATION

- A. I include the category of canonization in I Peter because the issue is so controversial with II Peter.
- B. I Peter is listed in Eusebius' *Eccl. His.* 3:3:25, as being part of "the undisputed books." In the ancient church it was never doubted as a true letter from the Apostle Peter.
- C. The issue of canonicity is exacerbated because of the number of spurious writings attributed to Peter. The early church never accepted any of these, recognizing only I Peter and the disputed II Peter as truly from the Apostle.
  - 1. Acts of Peter
  - 2. Acts of Peter and Andrew
  - 3. Acts of Peter and Paul
  - 4. The Passion of Peter and Paul
  - 5. The Acts of Peter and the Twelve
  - 6. Apocalypse of Peter
  - 7. Gospel of Peter
  - 8. Passion of Peter
  - 9. Preaching of Peter
  - 10. Slavonic Acts of Peter

(For a discussion of each of these pseudonymous writings see the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* Vol. 4; pp. 721-723, 732-733, 740.) None of these writings supposedly attributed to Peter were even seriously considered to be part of the canon of the NT. This, in and of itself, says much about the inclusion of I and II Peter.

## READING CYCLE ONE (see p. v)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

- 1. Theme of entire book
- 2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO (see pp. v)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

- 1. Subject of first literary unit
- 2. Subject of second literary unit
- 3. Subject of third literary unit
- 4. Subject of fourth literary unit
- 5. Etc.

# I PETER 1:1-2:3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting to the Elect Pilgrims	Salutations	Introduction	Address and Greetings
1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1a 1:b-2a 1:2b	1:1-2
A Living Hope	A Heavenly Inheritance	Rejoice in Salvation	A Living Hope	Introduction and The Inheritance of Christians
1:3-9	1:3-12	1:3-9	1:3-5  1:6-9	1:3-5  Faithfulness to Christ and Love of Christ  1:6-9  The Hope of the Prophets
1:10-12		1:10-12	1:10-12	1:10-12
A Call to Holy Living	Living Before God our Father	An Appeal for Holiness  (1:13-2:10)	A Call to Holy Living	The Demands of the New Life and Holiness of the Newly Baptized
1:13-16	1:13-21	1:13-16	1:13-16	1:13-21
1:17-21		1:17-21	1:17-21	
	The Enduring Word			Regeneration by the Word
1:22-25	1:22-2:3	1:22-2:3	1:22-25	1:22-2:3

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v of the introduction article on Good Bible Reading)

*FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph

---

\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen <sup>2</sup>according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.**

**1:1 “Peter”** Peter was the obvious spokesman for the twelve Apostles. He was a part of the inner circle (Peter, James, and John). Peter’s eyewitness account of Jesus’ life and teachings (cf. 5:1) is recorded in the Gospel of Mark (possibly the first Gospel written; also possibly written by Mark from Peter’s sermons in Rome).

Jesus’ special relationship to Peter is documented in both Matthew 16 and John 21. However, this special relationship was not acknowledged as headship. Peter as the leader (Pope) of western Christendom is a historical development (as is the Roman Catholic view of Mary), not a clear biblical teaching. I Peter gives a window into the pastoral heart and tumultuous life of this wonderful leader.

The term *petros* in Greek means “a detached stone” in contrast to (*petra*, i.e., FEMININE) “bedrock” (cf. Matt. 16:18); in Aramaic both would have been translated *Cephas*; any distinction between the two Greek terms would have been missing in Jesus’ words to Peter!

▣ **“an apostle”** This was used in rabbinical Judaism with the connotation of “one sent with authority.” Peter is always listed first. Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them “Apostles” (cf. Luke 6:13). This term is often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). The Twelve are listed in Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:12-13.

▣ **“Jesus”** The Hebrew name meant “YHWH saves” or “YHWH brings salvation.” This name was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *hosea*, suffixed to the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua.

▣ **“Christ”** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *messiah*, which meant “an anointed one.” It implies “one called and equipped by God for a specific task.” In the OT three groups of leaders were anointed: priests, kings, and prophets. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3). See Special Topic: Anointing in the Bible at Mark 6:13.



NASB	“to those who reside as aliens”
NKJV	“to the pilgrims of the diaspora”
NRSV	“to the exile of the Dispersion”
TEV	“to God’s chosen people who live as refugees”
NJB	“to all those living as aliens”

This cyclical letter was sent to congregations of mostly Gentile believers (1:14,18; 2:9-10,12; 4:3-4). Peter often uses OT terminology to describe the NT Church (cf. I Pet. 2:5,9).

▣ **“scattered throughout”** This is literally “diaspora,” which means “to sow.” This term was usually used by Palestinian Jews to refer to Jews living outside of Palestine (cf. John 7:35). Peter uses it to refer to churches made up of Gentiles and Jewish believers in northern Asia Minor. These believers are now citizens of heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:8-10,13-16), but for the remainder of their earthly lives they live as aliens and exiles.

▣ **“Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”** Pontus was not a Roman province. This list refers mostly to racial groups. The list seems to reflect the route of the bearer of this letter, starting at Sinope on the Black Sea and moving clockwise back to Bithynia. Several of these groups are mentioned as being present at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:9-11).

**1:2 “who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”** This is a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God (which characterizes I Peter), often used in the OT to acknowledge YHWH’s choice of Israel (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; 14:2; Isa. 65:9). In the OT election is related to service; however, in the NT the term relates to spiritual salvation.

Foreknowledge (the NOUN [*prognōsis*] only here and Acts 2:23; the VERB [*proginōskō*] is used theologically in Rom. 8:29; 11:2) is not related to human effort or merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). God is sovereign and all history is present to Him. Only humans experience time as past, present, and future. Remember that Peter, the spokesman for the Apostolic group and denier of the Lord, is the one who writes these words. Peter was chosen because of who God is, not because of who Peter was! God’s grace is not related to foreknowledge or else salvation would be based on a future human act.

The Trinity is actively seen here: the Father (vv. 3-5); the Son (vv. 6-9); and the Holy Spirit (vv. 10-12). The word “Trinity” is not a biblical term, but the Triune God is often mentioned in unified contexts. See Special Topic: The Trinity at Mark 1:11.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION**

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others’ redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent. Ex.: Security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner; etc.).

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from mankind (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

▣ **“by the sanctifying work of the Spirit”** “Sanctify” is from the same Greek root as “saint” or “holy”; in Aramaic this root implies “set apart for a special task.” Believers are the “called out, separated, and task-assigned ones” (cf. II Thess. 2:13, which is also a Trinitarian passage).

This opening affirmation of the redemptive functions of all three persons of the Trinity in relation to fallen mankind’s sin problem is crucial in understanding Peter’s gospel.

1. The Father – chose
2. The Spirit – sanctified
3. The Son – laid down His life

Since this phrase is found in both II Thess. 2:13 and I Pet. 1:2, it is interesting to speculate whether Silvanus (cf. 5:12, also called Silas) may have been the scribe Peter used to write I Peter as well as the scribe Paul used to write I and II Thessalonians (cf. I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). There are several hints like this throughout I Peter. See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at Mark at 3:29. This also demonstrates the freedom of composition (i.e., words and phrases) given to scribes on common liturgical phrasing used by the early church community.

▣ **“to obey Jesus Christ”** The Bible presents mankind’s relationship with God in covenantal terms. God always takes the initiative and sets the agenda, but mankind must respond in repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance. We are saved to serve! Obedience is crucial (cf. Luke 6:46; Eph. 2:10). See Special Topic: Covenant at Mark 14:24.

▣ **“and be sprinkled with His blood”** This is an OT metaphor for

1. cleansing and forgiveness (cf. Lev. 14:1-7)
2. inaugurating the book of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 24:3-8)
3. installment into a new position (cf. Exod. 29:20-22)

Jesus' sacrifice (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21) allows His followers to be accepted, cleansed, forgiven, and to obtain a new relationship with God (cf. Heb. 10:22; 12:24). Believers are a blood-bought (redeemed) and blood-sprinkled (sanctification) people.

▣ **“May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure”** This is similar to II Pet. 2:1 and Jude v. 2. Paul also used a similar opening in his letters. Peter may have been acquainted with Paul's letters, especially Romans and Ephesians, or they both drew from a common first century catechismal (i.e., set training materials for new believers) tradition. Remember that Silas may have served as a scribe to both Peter (cf. 5:12) and Paul (cf. I and II Thess. 1:1). Silas also replaced John Mark, who possibly taught new believers. If so, Silas was also involved in catechismal training and thereby was familiar with the early church's written material for new believers.

“Grace and Peace” is a uniquely Christian opening greeting as well as a theological affirmation of the priority of God's gracious character and redemptive acts which set the stage for mankind's peace, a peace brought about by the actions of the Triune God (cf. v. 2). Our peace is only possible because of who God is and what He has done.

It is a bit of a stretch to state this common Christianized letter opening as proof that Peter wrote to both believing Gentiles (grace, which was a Christianized form of Greek greeting, *charein*) and Jews (peace, which was a translation of the typical Jewish greeting *shalom*).

▣ **“be yours in the fullest measure”** This is a Hebraic idiom common in Jewish prayers (cf. I Pet. 1:2; Jude 2).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:3-9**

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to obtain an inheritance *which* is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup>so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, <sup>8</sup>and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup>obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

**1:3 “Blessed”** This term (*eulogētos*) is not like the one used in Matthew 5 (*makarios*). It is exclusively used of God in the NT. We get the English word “eulogy” from this word. This is similar to the praise to the Trinity found in Eph. 1:3-14: vv. 3-5 relate to the Father, 6-9 to the Son, and 10-12 the Spirit.

▣ **“the God and Father of”** Thomas Aquinas attempts to prove the existence of God by focusing on

1. design
2. logical necessity of a first cause or prime mover
3. cause and effect

However, these deal with human philosophical and logical necessities. The Bible reveals God in personal categories not available to human reason or research. Only revelation reveals God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. See Special Topic: Father at Mark 13:22.

▣ **“Lord”** The Greek term “Lord” (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a developed theological sense. It can mean “mister,” “sir,” “master,” “owner,” “husband” or “the full God-man” (cf. John 9:36, 38). The OT usage of this term (Hebrew, *adon*) came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Mark 12:26. They were afraid of breaking the Commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So when they read the Scriptures they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word *kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase “Jesus is Lord” was probably the public confession of faith and a baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

▣ **“who according to His great mercy”** This passage, extolling the character of God the Father (vv. 3-5), may reflect an early hymn, poem, or catechismal liturgy. The main character of the Bible is God! It is His purpose, character, and actions which are fallen mankind's only hope for acceptance and perseverance (cf. Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5).

▣ **“has caused us”** This kind of phrase is used to assert God's sovereignty as the only biblical truth related to salvation (cf. Acts 11:18; James 1:18; Eph. 1:4), but this is only half of the covenant concept. See Special Topic at Mark 14:24.



▣ **“to be born again”** This is the same root (*anagennaō*, cf. 1:23) as in John 3:3 (*gennaō*). It is an AORIST ACTION PARTICIPLE, which speaks of a decisive act. The NT also uses other metaphors to describe our salvation: (1) “quickened” (cf. Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:4-5; (2) “new creation” (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15); and (3) “partaker of Divine Nature,” (cf. II Pet. 1:4). Paul is fond of the familial metaphor “adoption” while John and Peter are fond of the familial metaphor “new birth.”

Being “born again” or “born from above” is a biblical emphasis on the need for a totally new start, a totally new family (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). Christianity is not a reformation or a new morality; it is a new relationship with God. This new relationship is made possible because of

1. the Father’s mercy and grace
2. the Son’s sacrificial death and resurrection from the dead
3. the work of the Spirit (cf. v. 2)

This divine will and action gives believers a new life, a living hope, and a sure inheritance.

▣ **“to a living hope”** The ADJECTIVE “living” is a recurring emphasis in I Peter (cf. 1:3,23; 2:4,5,24; 4:5,6). All that God wills and does is “alive” and remains (i.e., word play on YHWH).

▣ **“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** Jesus is the Father’s agent and means of redemption (as He is the Father’s agent in creation as well as judgment). Jesus’ resurrection is a central truth of the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:4; I Corinthians 15). The resurrection is the aspect of the Christian message that the Greeks could not accept (cf. Acts 17:16-34).

**1:4 “to obtain an inheritance which is”** In the OT every tribe except Levi received a land inheritance. The Levites, as the tribe of priests, temple servants, and local teachers, were seen as having YHWH Himself as their inheritance (cf. Ps. 16:5; 73:23-26; 119:57; 142:5; Lam. 3:24). NT writers often took the rights and privileges of the Levites and applied them to all believers. This was their way of asserting that the followers of Jesus were the true people of God and that now all believers were called to serve as priests to God (cf. I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), as the OT asserts of all Israel (cf. Exod. 19:4-6). The NT emphasis is not on the individual as a priest with certain privileges, but on the truth that all believers are priests, which demands a corporate servant attitude (cf. I Cor. 12:7). The NT people of God have been given the OT task of world evangelization (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5b; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

This is the concept of Jesus as owner of creation because He was the Father’s agent of creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2-3). We are co-heirs because He is the heir (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Col. 3:24).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS’ INHERITANCE**

The Scriptures talk about believers inheriting (cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18; Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:12; 3:24) many things because of their family relationship with Jesus who is heir of all things (cf. Heb. 1:2), and they as coheirs (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7) of

1. the kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34, I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Eph. 5:5)
2. eternal life (cf. Matt. 19:29; Heb. 9:15)
3. God’s promises (cf. Heb. 6:12)
4. God’s protection of His promises (cf. I Pet. 1:4; 5:4)

▣ **“imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away”** In v. 4 three descriptive phrases are used to describe the believer’s inheritance using OT historical allusions to the Promised Land. Palestine was geographically located on the only land bridge between the empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt. This led to many invasions and much political maneuvering. The believer’s inheritance is not affected by earthly conflict.

1. it is “imperishable” or “secure from invasion”
2. it is “undefiled” or “not worn out”
3. it will “not fade away”; there is no time limit on its possession

▣ **“reserved in heaven for you”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which means God has guarded and continues to guard believers’ inheritance. This is a military term for a guarded or garrisoned fortress (cf. Phil. 4:7).

The term “heaven” is PLURAL. This reflects the Hebrew PLURAL. Ancient Hebrew had many PLURAL NOUNS which may have been a way of emphasizing them (e.g. the later rabbinical use of the PLURAL OF MAJESTY used for God). The rabbis debated whether there were three levels of heaven (cf. Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; II Cor. 12:2) or seven heavens because seven is the perfect number (cf. Gen. 2:1-3).

**1:5 “who are protected by the power of God”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. As our inheritance (spiritual life) is guarded, so, too, is our person (physical life). God’s person and promises encompass every aspect of our lives. This was such

a needed and helpful word of encouragement in a time of persecution, suffering, and false teaching (cf. II Peter). This is not to imply that believers will not be killed and tortured; rather God was with them and for them and ultimately they are victors through Him. This is theologically similar to the message of the book of Revelation.

▣ **“through faith”** Notice the covenantal paradox. God is guarding them and their inheritance, but they must remain in faith. It is the tension between these biblical dialectical pairs (i.e., God’s sovereignty and human free will) which has caused the development of theological systems emphasizing only one side of the paradox. Both sides are biblical; both sides are necessary! God deals with humans by means of unconditional (God providing) and conditional (individual’s responding) covenants.

▣ **“a salvation ready to be revealed”** The Bible uses all Greek VERB TENSES to describe salvation. We will not be fully, completely saved until Resurrection Day (cf. I John 3:2). This is often called our glorification (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION**

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven, but a life of growing Christlikeness. We have a proverbial saying in America that says the longer a couple lives together, the more they begin to look alike. This is the goal of salvation!

### **SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST)**

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)

### **SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT)**

- Ephesians 2:5,8

### **SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT)**

- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15
- I Peter 3:21

### **SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)**

- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13
- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5
- Philippians 1:28;
- I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28
- I Peter 1:5,9

Therefore, salvation begins with an initial faith decision (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but this must issue in a process of lifestyle faith (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 3:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10), which will one day be consummated in sight (cf. I John 3:2). This final state is called glorification. This can be illustrated as

1. initial glorification—justification (saved from the penalty of sin)
2. progressive salvation—sanctification (saved from the power of sin)
3. final salvation—glorification (saved from the presence of sin)

▣ **“in the last time”** This is the later Jewish concept of two ages, but from the New Testament we realize that these two ages are overlapped. The last days began at the Incarnation in Bethlehem and will conclude at the Second Coming. We have been in the last days for almost two millennia. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at Mark 13:8.

1:6

NASB

NKJV

NRSV (footnote)

**“In this you greatly rejoice”**

**“In this you rejoice”**

**“Rejoice in this”**

TEV  
NJB

“Be glad about this”  
“This is great joy to you”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE (A. T. Robertson) or IMPERATIVE (Barbara and Timothy Friberg). Believers continue to exalt because of their secure relationship with God (cf. 1:3-5) even amidst a fallen world (cf. James 1:2-4; I Thess. 5:16; Rom. 5:3; 8:18).

▣ **“even though now for a little while”** The trials and persecutions of the present cannot compare with eternity with our Lord (cf. Rom. 8:18).

▣ **“if necessary you have been distressed by various trials”** This is the Greek term *dei*, which means required or necessary, connected to a CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. There is an assumed “to be” VERB which would make it a PERIPHRASTIC FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL, which is assumed to be true. Peter assumes that godly living will result in persecution. He repeats this theme of persecution often (cf. 1:6-7; 2:19; 3:14-17; 4:1,12-14,19; 5:9).

▣ **“you have been distressed”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The unexpressed agent of the PASSIVE VOICE is the evil one; God uses even evil for His good purposes. Even Jesus Himself was perfected by the things He suffered (cf. Heb. 5:8-9). Suffering serves a needed goal in the life of faith!

The theological dilemma is that suffering has three possible sources

1. the evil one
2. a fallen world
3. God
  - a. for temporal punishment of sin
  - b. for Christlike maturity

The problem is I never know which one it is! So I choose to believe that if it comes, yea when it comes, God will use it for His purposes. My favorite book in this area is Hannah Whithall Smith’s *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*.

▣ **“by various trials”** This Greek ADJECTIVE means variegated or multicolored (cf. James 1:2). There are many types of trials, temptations, and persecutions. In I Pet. 4:10 the same term is used to describe the variegated graces of God. We never are tried and tempted beyond His provision (cf. I Cor. 10:13).

**1:7 “so that the proof of your faith”** This is a *hina* or purpose clause. Suffering does strengthen faith. Throughout the Bible, God has tested His children (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:22-25; 16:4; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; II Chr. 32:31; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1-2; Rom. 5:2-4; Heb. 5:8-9; James 1:2-4).

This verse has the NOUN *dikimon* and the PARTICIPLE of *dikimazō*, both of which have the connotation of testing with a view towards strengthening and thereby approval. See Special Topic on Greek Terms for “Testing” and their Connotations at Mark 1:13b.

▣ **“being more precious than gold”** In this life our greatest gift to God is our faith (cf. John 20:27; II Cor. 4:17). In eternity faith is changed to sight. God is honored and pleased when by faith we endure trials caused by our faith in Him (cf. 4:12-16). Spiritual growth only comes through tested faith (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; Heb. 12:11; James 1:2-4).

▣ **“the revelation of Jesus Christ”** This same word (*apokalupsis*) is used as the title for the last book of the NT, Revelation. It means “to uncover,” “fully disclose,” or “make known.” Here it refers to the Second Coming, a common theme in Peter’s writings (cf. 1:7,13; 2:12; 4:13; 5:4).

**1:8 “and though you have not seen Him”** Even amidst suffering believers are to trust in Him. Jesus prayed for those who believe in Him but have never seen Him in John 17:20; 20:29.

▣ **“but believe in Him”** The etymological background of this term helps establish the contemporary meaning. Remember the NT authors were Hebrew thinkers writing in Koine Greek. In Hebrew it originally referred to a person in a stable stance, (his feet positioned so he could not be pushed over). It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was dependable, loyal, or trustworthy. The Greek equivalent (*pistis* or *pisteuō*) is translated into English by the terms “faith,” “believe,” and “trust.” Biblical faith or trust is not primarily something we do, but someone in whom we put our trust. It is God’s trustworthiness, not ours, which is the focus. Fallen mankind trusts God’s trustworthiness, faiths His faithfulness, believes in His Beloved and in His provision. The focus is not on the abundance or intensity of human faith, but the object of that faith (cf. 1:8,21; 2:6-7). See Special Topic at Mark 1:15.

▣ **“you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible”** The term “greatly rejoice” was used earlier in v. 6. It refers to an intense joy usually accompanied with physical expressions such as shouting, dancing, etc. (cf. Luke 1:44,47; 10:21; John 5:35; 8:56). This joy, which Peter speaks of, is found even amidst suffering (cf. 4:13; Rom. 5:3; I Thess. 5:17). This joy is one of the unexpected blessings of the Spirit in times of testing and persecution.

▣ **“full of glory”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Believers by faith (not sight yet) burst out with both inexpressible joy and full glory! This joy and glory cannot be hidden. It is a flowing fountain produced by the Spirit (cf. John 4:14; 7:38). It is a witness to the power of the gospel to all who come into contact with gospel people under pressure. See Special Topic: Glory at Mark 10:37.

**1:9 “obtaining as the outcome of your faith”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This implies that our joy is not only a future consummation, but also a present reality even amidst suffering because of the Triune God’s actions on our behalf (cf. v. 2).

▣ **“the salvation of your souls”** This refers to our glorification. Salvation is viewed in the NT as a decision made (AORIST TENSE, cf. Rom. 8:24), but also as an ongoing process (PRESENT TENSE, cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; I Thess. 4:14) with a future consummation (i.e., FUTURE TENSE, cf. Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9). See Special Topic at I Peter 1:5. This future aspect is often characterized as “glorification” (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). Believers will one day see Jesus as He is and be changed into His likeness (cf. I John 3:2).

The Greek term *psuchē* (soul) is used often in Peter’s writings (cf. 1:9,22; 2:11,25; 3:20; 4:19; II Pet. 2:8,14). It is used as a Hebraic idiom for the entire person. Humans are not two-part or three-part beings, but a single unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). It is true that we as humans relate to this planet, because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we relate to the spiritual realm. We are citizens of two realms.

It is inappropriate to build a systematic theology on I Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12 and thereby try to relate all biblical texts into these three categories (body, soul, and spirit). They simply refer to the whole person and the penetrating power of the word of God. Be careful of someone claiming that the key to the whole Bible is found in two oblique texts, proof-texted out of context and made into a theological grid through which to view all Scripture (Watchman Nee). If this was a key the Spirit would have placed it in a clear teaching context and would have repeated it often. The Bible is not a book of riddles or brain teasers! God wants to communicate with us and major truths are found in clear teaching contexts.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO VERSES 1:10-21

- A. Verses 10-12 deal with the Old Testament prophets’ knowledge of NT salvation in Christ.
- B. “The Spirit” through the prophets, reveals three things to believers in verses 11-12.
  - 1. the suffering of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12)
  - 2. the glory that will follow (Isaiah 56-66)
  - 3. the prophets were speaking of more than just their own day (i.e., Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Zechariah)
- C. In verses 13-17 Peter asks believers to do six things to protect themselves
  - 1. gird their minds, v. 13
  - 2. keep sober in spirit, v. 13
  - 3. fix their hope on end-time grace, v. 13
  - 4. do not be conformed to present age, v. 14
  - 5. live holy lives, v. 15
  - 6. live in respect of God, v. 17
  - 7. fervently love one another (seventh added from v. 22)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-12

<sup>10</sup>As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, <sup>11</sup>seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. <sup>12</sup>It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

**1:10 “As to this salvation”** This has been the topic since (1) v. 2, which describes the work of the Triune God in salvation; (2) vv. 3-5, which describe God keeping and protecting this salvation; and (3) vv. 6-9, which describe these believers’ suffering because of this salvation.

▣ **“the prophets”** This refers to the OT prophets (cf. v. 12). In rabbinical thought all inspired writers were considered prophets. Moses is called a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:18) and what we call in English the historical books (i.e., Joshua through Kings) were called by the Jews “the former prophets.”

▣ **“of the grace that *would come* to you”** This phrase implies that the OT prophets knew something of the new covenant. This is also the implication of Jesus’ statement concerning Abraham in John 8:56 (cf. II Esdras 3:14). This same implication is stated in Heb. 11:13b. It is difficult to know exactly how much the OT prophets knew about the gospel. Jeremiah’s description of the New Covenant in Jer. 31:31-34 (also Ezek. 36:22-38) points toward an acceptance based on God’s love and actions, not human performance. Matthew 13:17 states that many OT prophets see and hear what Jesus was doing and saying.

Even Isaiah’s prophecy about a virgin birth (cf. 7:14), when interpreted in context, refers to a natural birth with supernatural timing (cf. 7:15-16), not exclusively a future Messianic birth. It is Matthew and Luke who see the full implication of Isaiah’s prophecy. This would be true of other specific prophecies in Hosea (cf. 11:1) and Zechariah (cf. 9:9; 11:13; 12:10). It was the Greek-speaking Jews of the NT and the Apostles who fully reveal Jesus from the OT (Christological typology). They may have learned this from Jesus Himself as He taught the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35, especially v. 27).

▣ **“made careful searches and inquiries”** These seem to be synonyms (cf. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: based on Semantic Domains*, Vol. 1, p. 331).

1:11

NASB	“seeking to know what person or time”
NKJV	“searching what, or what manner of time”
NRSV	“inquiring about the person or time”
TEV (footnote)	“tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come”
NJB	“searching out the time and circumstances”

This implies both a person and a time. They expected a Davidic Messiah to break into history at a specific God-appointed time. Like us, they “looked through a glass darkly” (cf. I Cor. 13:9-13).

▣ **“the Spirit of Christ within them”** The Spirit and the Messiah are linked in the OT (cf. Isa. 11:1-2; 48:16; 61:1). Notice that the Holy Spirit is called “The Spirit of Christ” (cf. Rom. 8:9; Gal.4:6). Note also the indwelling aspect of the Spirit, even in the OT. Jesus’ and the Spirit’s tasks are overlapping. See the same truth expressed in II Pet. 1:21.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

There is a fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is “the other Jesus” (however, they are distinct, eternal persons). The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

1. Spirit called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).
2. Both called by the same terms
  - a. “truth”
    - 1) Jesus (John 14:6)
    - 2) Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13)
  - b. “advocate”
    - 1) Jesus (I John 2:1)
    - 2) Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
  - c. “Holy”
    - 1) Jesus (Luke 1:35; 4:34)
    - 2) Spirit (Luke 1:35)
3. Both indwell believers
  - a. Jesus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
  - b. Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14)
  - c. Father (John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16)

▣ **“predicted the sufferings of Christ”** This was what surprised the Jews (cf. I Cor. 1:23). The Suffering Servant became a central pillar of the early sermons of Peter and Paul in Acts which we call the *kerygma* (i.e., that which was proclaimed, cf.

2:23,24; 3:18; 4:11; 10:39; 17:3; 26:23). This is exactly what Jesus had tried to tell the Twelve during His time with them (cf. Matt. 16:21; 20:17-19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22), but they could not receive it (cf. Mark 9:31-32; 10:32-34; Luke 9:44-45; 18:31-34).

There are hints of the Messiah's suffering in the OT (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53), but the OT Israelites were expecting the Messiah to come as a conquering hero to judge all mankind and restore Israel to a place of prominence and power. They simply missed the two comings of the Messiah which are revealed by Jesus' life and teachings (i.e., Savior, Judge).

Below is an interesting chart of the *kerygma* found in H. Wayne House's *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, (p. 120).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

- A. The promises by God made in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 2:30; 3:19,24; 10:43; 26:6-7,22; Rom. 1:2-4; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2; I Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:18-19).
- B. Jesus was anointed as Messiah by God at His baptism (Acts 10:38).
- C. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after His baptism (Acts 10:37).
- D. His ministry was characterized by doing good and performing mighty works by means of the power of God (Mark 10:45; Acts 2:22; 10:38).
- E. The Messiah was crucified according to the eternal purpose of God (Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 2:23; 3:13-15,18; 4:11; 10:39; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 1:17-18; 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; I Peter 1:2,19; 3:18; I John 4:10).
- F. He was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples (Acts 2:24,31-32; 3:15,26; 10:40-41; 17:31; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; I Cor. 15:4-7,12ff; I Thess. 1:10; I Tim. 3:16; I Peter 1:2; 3:18,21).
- G. Jesus was exalted by God and given the name "Lord" (Acts 2:25-29,33-36; 3:13; 10:36; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3; I Peter 3:22).
- H. He gave the Holy Spirit to form the new community of God (Acts 1:8; 2:14-18,38-39; 10:44-47; I Peter 1:12).
- I. He will come again for judgment and the restoration of all things (Acts 3:20-21; 10:42; 17:31; I Cor. 15:20-28; I Thess. 1:10).
- J. All who hear the message should repent and be baptized (Acts 2:21,38; 3:19; 10:43,47-48; 17:30; 26:20; Rom. 1:17; 10:9; I Peter 3:21).

This schema served as the essential proclamation of the early church, though different authors of the New Testament may leave out a portion or emphasize other particulars in their preaching. The entire Gospel of Mark closely follows the Petrine aspect of the *kerygma*. Mark is traditionally seen as structuring Peter's sermons, preached in Rome, into a written Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke follow Mark's basic structure.

▣ "and the glories to follow" This is alluded to in Isa. 53:10-12.

**1:12 "they were not serving themselves, but you"** There are several places in Paul's writings where he asserts this same truth (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 9:9-10; 10:6,11). This is basically the same theology revealed in II Tim. 3:15-17. God's actions (revelation) and their recording and interpretation (inspiration) were for all future believers (illumination).

If Peter was writing to mostly Gentile believers, this phrase has the added theological affirmation of the inclusion of the Gentiles, which has always been God's plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; Romans 9-11; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW**

It is good and from God (cf. Rom. 7:12,16).

- A. it is not the way to righteousness and acceptance by God (it can even be a curse, cf. Galatians. 3).
- B. it is still God's will for believers because it is God's self-revelation (Paul often quotes the OT to convict and/or encourage believers).
- C. Believers are informed by the OT (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11), but not saved by the OT (cf. Acts 15; Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews)
- E. It functions in the new covenant to:
  - 1. show sinfulness (cf. Gal. 3:15-29)
  - 2. guide redeemed mankind in society
  - 3. inform Christian ethical decisions

It is this theological spectrum from cursing and passing away to blessing and permanency that causes the problem in trying to understand Paul's view of the Mosaic Law. In *A Man in Christ*, James Stewart shows Paul's paradoxical thinking and writing:

“You would normally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your writer in a particular sense, should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid. . . ‘The law is holy’ he writes, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’ (cf. Rom. 7:12,22) but it is clearly another aspect of *nomos* that makes him say elsewhere, ‘Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal. 3:13)’ (p. 26).

▣ **“through those who preached the gospel to you”** This seems to imply that Peter did not start all of these churches. They may have been started by believing Jews returning from Pentecost (cf. Acts 2), or by the preaching of Paul or other evangelists.

▣ **“by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven”** The Holy Spirit is mentioned at several key places in I Peter (cf. 1:2,11; 4:14). This phrase was a Hebrew idiom for asserting that the new age of righteousness, which was from God, brought by the Spirit, had fully come (cf. Acts 2).

▣ **“things into which angels long to look”** This is literally “to stoop over to see” as in John 20:5,11. In James 1:25 it is translated “look intently.” This refers to both good and evil angels (cf. Eph. 3:10; I Cor. 4:9).

In rabbinical Judaism angels were seen as the mediators between YHWH and Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). They were also depicted as jealous of God’s love and attention to humans. In Heb. 1:14 angels are described as servants of “those who will inherit salvation.” Paul even asserts that believers will judge the angels (cf. I Cor. 6:3).

God uniquely revealed Himself to angels through His dealings with fallen humanity (cf. I Cor. 4:9; Eph. 2:7; 3:10).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:13-16**

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup>but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup>because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

**1:13 “Therefore”** This (*dio*, cf. II Pet. 1:10,12; 3:14) shows that the exhortations that follow are the result of the previous discussion.

▣	
NASB	“prepare your minds for action”
NKJV	“gird up the loins of your mind”
NRSV	“prepare your minds for action”
TEV	“have your minds ready for action”
NJB	“your minds. . .ready for action”

This is an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. Its form denotes that a decisive act of personal choice is demanded. This is a Hebrew idiom, literally “gird up the loins of your mind.” In the Ancient Near East both men and women wore robes. By reaching through the legs and pulling the back of the robe forward and tucking it into the belt, the robe became pants, which allowed strenuous action. Similar admonitions of preparation for mental activity is found in Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:17,23.

▣ **“keep sober *in spirit*”** This is A PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE in a series of IMPERATIVES and PARTICIPLES used with IMPERATIVAL force. This is not a call to sobriety, but a metaphor for mental alertness and level headedness (cf. 4:7; 5:8; I Thess. 5:6,8; II Tim. 4:5).

▣ **“fix your hope completely”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE which means make a decisive choice to trust completely in Christ’s return. “Hope” in the NT often refers to the Second Coming (cf. Titus 2:13). Our hope is based on the settled and sure character and actions of the Triune God (cf. vv. 2,3-5).

▣ **“on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”** This is the same grace for which the OT prophets made careful search (cf. v. 10). This clearly shows that the believers’ hope is in the character and actions of the Triune God (cf. 1:2,3-5) and that His grace will be fully manifested at Jesus’ return (cf. I John 3:2). Salvation is described by all Greek VERB TENSES. See Special Topic at I Peter 1:5.

**1:14 “obedient children”** This is a Hebrew idiom of our family relationship with God the Father and Jesus the Son (negative expressions are found in Eph. 2:2; 5:6). Believers are co-heirs through Him (cf. Rom. 8:15-17). Amazingly, sinners are part of the family of God by His invitation and Jesus’ sacrifice.



**NASB, NRSV** “do not be conformed”  
**NKJV** “not conforming yourselves”  
**TEV** “do not allow your lives to be shaped”  
**NJB** “do not allow yourselves to be shaped”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE or PASSIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. As so often in the NT believers are described as being acted upon by God or the Spirit (PASSIVE VOICE), but there is the grammatical possibility that believers are being called on to clearly live out their new relationship to God through the power of His Spirit (MIDDLE VOICE).

As salvation is a conditional covenant, initiated by God but with a mandated response, so too, the Christian life. Eternal life has observable characteristics (cf. v. 15). Much of Peter’s terminology is from Paul’s letters, here Rom. 12:2.

☐ **“to the former lusts *which were yours in your ignorance*”** This refers to the Gentile believers’ immoral and godless pagan past (cf. 4:2-3; Eph. 4:17-19).

**1:15**

**NASB** “but like the Holy One who called you”  
**NKJV** “but as He who called you is holy”  
**NRSV** “instead, as he who called you is holy”  
**TEV** “instead. . .just as God who called you is holy”  
**NJB** “after the model of the Holy One who calls us”

This is an emphasis on God’s character and sovereign choice (cf. 2:9; 5:10). No one can come to God unless the Spirit draws them (cf. John 6:44,65). This is another theological way of repudiating divine acceptance by means of human performance (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). My sermon title on this text is “The Holy One’s holy ones.”

☐ **“be holy yourselves also”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. Believers are called to holiness. God’s will has always been that His children reflect His character (cf. Titus 2:14). The goal of Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; II Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23). Jesus’ task was not only remission of sin, but the restoration of the image of God in fallen mankind. We must always be suspicious of an assurance of salvation that lacks Christlikeness! The gospel is (1) a person to welcome; (2) a truth about that person to believe; and (3) a life emulating that person to live (cf. Eph. 4:1; 5:1-2,15; I John 1:7; 2:4-6). Remember the shocking words of Jesus in Matt. 5:20 and 48! Always be careful of “what’s-in-it-for-me” Christianity. We are saved to serve. We are called to holiness in no uncertain terms. God have mercy on a western church trapped by (1) prosperity; (2) materialism; and (3) health/wealth preaching!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION**

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Rom. 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

### **Initial Response**

Acts 20:23; 26:18  
 Romans 15:16  
 I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11  
 II Thessalonians 2:13  
 Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12  
 I Peter 1:12

### **A Progressive Christlikeness**

Romans 6:19  
 II Corinthians 7:1  
 Ephesians 1:4; 2:10  
 I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23  
 I Timothy 2:15  
 II Timothy 2:21  
 Hebrews 12:14  
 I Peter 1:15-16



▣ **“in all your behavior”** Notice the emphasis on “all.” The challenge is not selected righteousness, but pervasive holiness (cf. I John 3:3).

**1:16 “because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY’”** “Written” is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which is an idiom for Scripture used so often by Jesus, but only here in Peter. This is a quote from Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26. This is not a new requirement, but a repeated requirement (cf. Matt. 5:48). Holiness in the OT sense was not sinlessness, but a conformity to the covenant requirements of God (i.e., Exod. 19:6; 22:31; Deut. 14:2,21; 26:19). The NT also has covenant requirements which issue in Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23). See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

- I. The Old Testament
  - A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
  - B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
  - C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
  - D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.
- II. The New Testament
  - A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
  - B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
  - C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:17-21

<sup>17</sup>If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup>but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. <sup>20</sup>For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, <sup>21</sup>who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

**1:17 “if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **“you address as Father”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE (cf. Hos. 11:1-3; Jer. 3:19), implying that believers will continue to call upon YHWH in family terms (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6) as Jesus taught them (cf. Matt. 6:9). See Special Topic: Father at Mark 13:32.

▣ **“the One who impartially judges”** God will call into account not only those who have never known Him, but also those who claim to know Him (cf. 4:5,17-18; Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10). Those to whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48)!

If we call Him Father, then we should reflect the family characteristic, as does the eldest Son! Our Father, the Holy One, is an impartial judge (cf. Deut. 10:17; II Chr. 19:7; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; I Pet. 1:17).

Human beings have a choice (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Josh. 24:15; Ezek. 18:30-32) in how they will relate to God. He can be a loving Father if they trust in Christ (cf. John 1:12; Rom. 10:9-13) or He can be a holy judge if they rely on their own merits or performance of religious rites, rules, and procedures (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Col. 2:20-23). Do you want mercy or justice?

The term “impartial” reflects an OT idiom, “to lift the face.” Judges should not be affected by who is accused, rather by their actions.

▣ **“according to each one’s work”** This is a moral universe. God is the Judge. Humans will give an account unto God for the gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). We are all stewards and we reap what we sow (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 12:14; 24:12; Isa. 3:10-11; Jer. 17:10; Hos. 4:9; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; I Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7; Col. 3:25; Rev. 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12).

▣ **“conduct yourself in fear”** There is an appropriate respect due a holy God (cf. II Cor. 5:21). That respect is that His children live godly lives, knowing that they will give an account to God for the gift of life and the gospel.

▣ **“during the time of your stay on earth”** This refers to believers sojourning in an alien land (cf. v. 1; 2:11; Heb. 11:9-10). This world is not our home!

**1:18 “knowing”** Our knowledge of Christ’s work on our behalf causes us to live a life of Christlike obedience.

There has been speculation among commentators as to Peter’s use of early church creeds, hymns, or worship liturgy. I Peter 1:18-21 and 2:21-25 show signs of poetic pattern. Paul also made use of this creedal, hymnic, liturgical material or possibly even catechismal literature made lyrical to aid memory (cf. Eph. 5:19; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-16; 3:15-20; I Tim. 3:16; II Tim. 2:11-13).

▣ **“redeemed”** The term “redeemed” reflects an OT term “to buy someone back” from poverty or slavery. There are two Hebrew terms (ransom, redeem). One has the added connotation of “to be bought back by a near kin” (*go’el*, the kinsman redeemer, cf. Ruth 4:1,3,6,8,14). Jesus is our near-kin who has purchased our forgiveness with His own life (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at Mark 10:45.

▣  
NASB, NJB      **“from your futile way of life”**  
NKJV           **“from your aimless conduct”**  
NRSV           **“from the futile ways”**  
TEV             **“from the worthless manner of life”**

There are two ways of interpreting this phrase.

1. It refers to OT traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23) and reflects the Hebrew term “vain,” “empty” or “mist” (cf. Jer. 2:5; Zech. 10:2). The next phrase alludes to the sacrificial system of the OT. If so, then Peter is speaking to believing Jews.
2. It refers to v. 14 and to the immoral, pagan, past experience of Gentile believers.

For a general sense of this term see Acts 14:15; I Cor. 15:17; Titus 3:9 and James 1:26.

**1:19 “with precious blood as a lamb”** This phrase is an allusion to Israel’s sacrificial system (cf. Lev. 1-7). God graciously allowed sinful mankind to approach Him by means of sacrifice. Sin takes a life. Life is in the blood (cf. Lev. 18:11,14). God allowed the substitution of an animal life. John the Baptist called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (cf. John 1:29). Jesus’ prophesied death (cf. Isa. 53:7-8) dealt with the sin of the entire world (cf. John 3:16,17; 4:42; I John 2:2; 4:14).

▣ **“unblemished and spotless”** These are OT sacrificial metaphors for acceptable animals for sacrifice (cf. Lev. 22:19-20), but here they refer to the sinlessness of Jesus (cf. John 8:46; 14:30; Luke 23:41; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27; I Pet. 2:22, 3:18; I John 3:5). He was an acceptable, holy sacrifice.

**1:20 “For He was foreknown”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. God’s redemptive work is described by this very term in 1:2. Christ’s death was not an afterthought (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Mark 10:45; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). Jesus came to die!

▣ **“before the foundation of the world”** This phrase is used several times in the NT. It speaks of the pre-creation activity of God for mankind’s redemption (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). This also implies the pre-existence of Jesus (cf. John 1:1-2, 8:57-58; II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Rev. 13:8).

▣ **“but has appeared”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE which means “God has caused Him to be clearly revealed” (cf. Heb. 9:26; I John 1:2; 3:5,8).

▣ **“in these last times”** This refers to Jesus’ incarnation at Bethlehem. He existed as deity from all eternity, but was clearly revealed in human form in Bethlehem according to prophecy (cf. Mic. 5:2).

The last days began with Jesus’ birth as He inaugurated the Kingdom. They will be consummated at the Second Coming. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at I Peter 1:5.

▣ **“who through Him are believers in God”** This is literally “the ones. . .believing.” The ADJECTIVE *pistos* is used as a SUBSTANTIVE (“the believing ones”).

The etymological background of the term believe (Hebrew *emeth*, Greek, *pistis*) helps establish the contemporary meaning. In Hebrew it originally referred to a person in a stable stance. It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was dependable, loyal, or trustworthy. The Greek equivalent is translated into English by the terms “faith,” “believe,” and “trust.” Biblical faith or trust is not primarily something we do, but someone in whom we put our trust. It is God’s trustworthiness, not ours, which is the focus. Fallen mankind trusts God’s trustworthiness, faiths His faithfulness, believes in His Beloved. The focus is not on the abundance or intensity of human faith, but the object of that faith.

**1:21 “who raised Him from the dead”** This shows God’s approval of Jesus’ life and death. This is a recurrent theme of Peter (cf. Acts 2:24-28,32, 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; I Pet. 1:13, 3:18,21, and Paul, Acts 13:30,,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24, 8:11; 10:9; II Cor. 4:14). This was confirmation of the Father’s acceptance of the Son’s substitutionary death (cf. I Cor. 15). Theologically all three persons of the Trinity were active in Christ’s resurrection.

1. the Father (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34; 17:31)
2. the Spirit (Rom. 8:11)
3. the Son (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)

▣ **“and gave Him glory”** In this context the Father’s acceptance and approval of the Son’s words and works are expressed in two great events.

1. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead
  2. Jesus’ ascension to the Father’s right hand
- See Special Topic: Glory at Mark 10:37b.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:22-25**

<sup>22</sup>Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, <sup>23</sup>for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup>For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, <sup>25</sup>But the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.

**1:22 “in obedience”** Obedience is a recurrent theme in chapter one (cf. 1:2,14,22). It refers to receiving the gospel (i.e., truth, cf. John 17:17; II Thess. 2:12) and walking in it. Remember the gospel is (1) a person; (2) truth about that person; and (3) a life like that person. Jesus expressed the importance of obedience so clearly in Luke 6:46. Obedience is the evidence that we have truly met Him and been changed by Him. Eternal life has observable characteristics.

▣ **“to the truth”** Literally “by obedience of the truth,” which is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE. Truth is the characteristic of both God and His children. See Special Topic: Truth at II Pet. 1:12.

▣ **“purified your souls”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. Obedience to the truth issues in a personal purging (cf. James 4:8; I John 3:3). This spiritual purging does not earn God’s love and acceptance, but reflects it instead. This purifying process starts at salvation and continues throughout life (PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). It results in a sincere love of the brothers (cf. I John 4:7-21). Christianity is both (1) an individual faith response to God’s offer of salvation through Christ and (2) a corporate experience of service to the body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12:7). Believers express their love for God by loving His other children (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). See fuller note on “souls” at 1:9.

▣ **“love of the brethren. . . fervently love another”** The first use of “love” in this phrase is in a compound Greek word *philadelphí* (brotherly love). The second is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of the VERB *agapaō*. These terms (*phileō* and *agapaō*) were used interchangeably in the NT (cf. John 5:20 versus 3:25 and 16:27 versus 17:23). In some passages like John 21:15-17, they might convey different aspects of love. The early church took a relatively unused NOUN (*agapē*) and began using it to express the unique self-giving love of God in Christ.

**1:23 “for you have been born again”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This develops the theological thought from 1:3. It is a family metaphor used to describe Christians as new members of God’s family through their faith in Christ (cf. John 1:12-13). It is similar in meaning to John’s “born from above” in John 3:3.

Notice the marvelous truth conveyed in the VERB.

1. PERFECT TENSE = our salvation started in the past and continues into a current state of being
2. PASSIVE VOICE = we did not save ourselves, it was an outside act by the Triune God
3. This same VERB form (different Greek word) is found in Eph. 2:5,8, which is also a wonderful verse on the believer’s assurance and security.

▣ **“not of seed which is perishable”** Seed is a biblical metaphor for (1) procreation (i.e., used by the rabbis for sperm) or (2) physical descent (i.e., Gen. 12:1-3 for Abraham’s descendants). It is that which brings forth life.

▣ **“through the living and enduring word of God”** Gospel preaching is personified as the means by which the Father has brought forth believers (cf. James 1:18). This Apostolic preaching of the truth of the gospel is described as both alive and remaining (cf. Heb. 4:12), which are both aspects of YHWH!

**1:24** Verses 24-25a are a quote from the LXX of Isaiah 40:6-8 (cf. Job 14:1-2; Ps. 90:5-6, 103:15-17) which also emphasized the frailty and finitude of human life (cf. James 1:10-11) versus the eternality of God’s Word (cf. James 1:21). In their original context these verses referred to Israel, but now they refer to the church (cf. 2:5,9). This transfer is characteristic of I Peter.

**1:25 “the word of the Lord”** There are two Greek words usually translated “word” or “message.” In Koine Greek *logos* (cf. John 1:1; I Pet. 1:23) and *rēma* (cf. the OT quote from the Septuagint in 1:25a and alluded to in v. 25b) are usually synonymous. Context, not a lexicon, determines synonymy. God has revealed Himself (i.e., revelation)!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, <sup>2</sup>like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, <sup>3</sup>if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

**2:1 “Therefore”** This shows that the following discussion is based on what has just been stated.

▣ **“putting aside”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE which literally refers to personally “stripping off.” The removal of clothing is a common biblical metaphor describing the spiritual life (cf. Job 29:14; Psalm 109; 29; Isa. 61:10; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22,25,31; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1).

Notice the MIDDLE VOICE, which emphasizes the action of the subject. Believers are to once-and-for-all (AORIST TENSE as a completed act) strip off all evil. This is only possible because of the previous theological presentation of the work of the Triune God (cf. v. 2). Fallen mankind is not able unaided to turn from sin and evil, but God in Christ through the Spirit has enabled believers to turn completely to God (cf. Rom. 6). The tragedy is that believers continue to relinquish this God-given power and choose to return to evil (cf. Rom. 7).

▣ **“all malice”** This refers to an “active ill-will” (cf. Rom. 1:29; I Cor. 5:8; 14:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 3:3; I Pet. 2:16). Lists of vices were common in the Roman world (e.g. Stoics) and the NT (cf. Mark 7:21-27; Rom. 1:29-31; 13:13; I Cor. 5:10; 6:9-10; II Cor. 12:2; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; I Tim. 1:9-10; II Pet. 2:10-14; Rev. 21:8, 22:15).

▣ **“all deceit”** This term was used of “fishing bait.” It depicts an attempt to entrap another by means of trickery (cf. I Cor. 12:16; I Thess. 2:3; I Pet. 2:1,22; 3:10).

▣ **“hypocrisy”** This is literally “to judge under.” It is a theatrical word used of actors speaking behind a mask.

▣ **“envy”** This is a jealousy caused by the desire to have something another person possesses (cf. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10; Rom. 1:29; Phil. 1:15; I Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:3; James 4:5).

▣ **“slander”** This refers to speaking evil of another person, to defame them (cf. Rom. 1:30; II Cor. 12:20; I Pet. 2:1,12; 3:16). This activity is used in both the OT and the NT to describe Satan. It is obvious by its very mentioning that it was also a problem in these early churches who were experiencing such persecution.

**2:2 “like newborn babies”** This possibly related to Jesus’ admonition to His disciples to have faith like little children (cf. Matt. 18:3ff). It also relates to the earlier familial metaphor of being born again (cf. I Pet. 1:3,23; John 3:3).

In chapter 2 Peter uses several metaphors to describe believers.

1. newborn babes, 2:1
2. living stones forming a spiritual house, 2:5
3. a priesthood, 2:5,9
4. a people, 2:9-10
5. aliens and strangers, 2:11
6. sheep, 2:25

▣ **“long for”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a strong word for desire (cf. Phil. 1:8; 2:26). Spiritual growth and maturity are not automatic in the Christian’s life. The essence of this command may be seen in Ps. 42:1-4 and Matt. 5:6.

▣ **“the pure”** This is a term taken from the wine industry of the first century. It is the term *dolon* (guile, cf. v. 1) with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE. Wine was often mixed with water, especially older wine. Often merchants tried to sell watered down or diluted wine. Therefore, this term was used metaphorically of that which was “unmixed” or “genuine.”

Keeping with the contextual metaphor of newborn baby Christians, this refers to the necessary nourishment of babies, milk. These people were saved by the word of God (cf. 1:23); now they need to develop in the word of God. This is an expected and required result of new birth. Oh, the tragedy of believers remaining baby Christians.

▣ **“milk”** Tertullian gave “new believers” milk and honey after their baptism as a symbol of their new life in Christ based on this very texts. We need the truth of God, which is revealed in Christ and the preaching of the Apostles continually (cf. Heb. 5:12).



NASB, NKJV “of the word”

NRSV, TEV, NJB “spiritual”

This is the philosophical term *logikos* as in Rom. 12:1. It can refer to mental reasoning (cf. NASB, NKJV) or metaphorically of the spiritual (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB). It is obviously related to the new believers’ need for Apostolic preaching and teaching (cf. 1:23-25). Believers need to read and know the Bible.

▣ **“you may grow in respect to salvation”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Apostolic preaching is personified as the agent of the PASSIVE VOICE, which causes believers to grow. Salvation is viewed in the NT as

1. a past decision (AORIST TENSE)
2. an ongoing process (PRESENT TENSE)
3. a past event culminating in a current state (PERFECT TENSE)
4. a future consummation (FUTURE TENSE)

This context is stating that spiritual growth by means of God’s revealed truth (cf. 1:23,25; 2:2) is crucial for a consummated Christian life. See Special Topic at 1:5.

**2:3 “if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL which is assumed to be true. Believers who have experienced the grace of God are expected to desire God’s truth and grow in God’s truth into a full and complete salvation. Verse 3 is an allusion to Ps. 34:8. The Psalm refers to YHWH, but here it refers to Jesus. The United Bible Societies *Handbook on the First Letter from Peter* asserts that this may refer to a believer’s first communion (p. 53).

1. a word play between kindness (*chrēstos*) and Christ (*Christos*)
2. Psalm 34 was used by the early church during communion services
3. “taste” (AORIST TENSE) refers to the first communion (possibly after baptism)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is Peter writing to Jews or Gentiles, or both?
2. What is the central truth of Peter's prayer in vv. 3-9?
3. Why do Christians suffer?
4. Why is our salvation said to be still in the future?
5. What did the OT prophets long to know in vv. 10-12?
6. List the commands found in vv. 13-22.
7. What do new believers need most?

# I PETER 2:4-25

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Living Stone and the Holy Nation	The enduring Word	An Appeal for Holiness	The Living Stone and the Holy Nation	Regeneration by the Word
	(1:22-2:3)	(1:23-2:10)		(1:22-2:3)
2:1-8	The Chosen Stone and His Chosen People		2:1-8	The New Priesthood
	2:4-10	2:4-8		2:4-8
2:9-10		2:9-10	2:9-10	2:9-10
Live as Servants of God	Living Before the World	The Obligation of Christians	Slaves of God	The Obligations of Christians: Toward Unbelievers
		(2:11-4:11)		
2:11-12	2:11-12	2:11-12	2:11-12	2:11-12
	Submission to Government			The Obligations of Christians: Toward Civil Authority
2:13-17	2:13-17	2:13-17	2:13-17	2:13-17
The Example of Christ's Suffering	Submission to Masters		The Example of Christ's Suffering	The Obligations of Christians: Toward Masters
2:18-25	2:18-25	2:18-25	2:18-25	2:18-20
				2:21-25

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v, opening article on Good Bible Reading) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-8

<sup>4</sup>And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup>you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." <sup>7</sup>This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER STONE," <sup>8</sup>and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

**2:4 "And coming to Him"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. NKJV, NRSV and TEV translate this as an IMPERATIVE. Note the continual coming and personal element, "to Him." The gospel is primarily a person to welcome, to trust, and to emulate. This term may have the connotation of approaching God, as a priest or worshiper (cf. Heb. 4:16; 7:25; 10:1,22; 11:6). Peter changes his metaphor from milk in vv. 2-3, to construction metaphors in vv. 4-8 (believers as living stones and Jesus as the cornerstone). This is possibly a continuing allusion to Ps. 34:4 from the Septuagint.

▣ **"as to a living stone"** In the OT God's stability, strength, and perseverance are often described by using the analogy of rock as a title (cf. Deut. 32:4,15,18,30; Ps. 18:2,31,46; 28:1; 31:3; 42:9; 71:3).

The metaphor of Jesus as a stone is found in

1. a rejected stone (Ps. 118:22)
2. a building stone (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16)
3. a stone to stumble over (Isa. 8:14-15)
4. an overcoming and conquering stone (kingdom), (Dan. 2:45)

Jesus used these passages to describe Himself (cf. Matt. 21:40; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17).

▣ **"which has been rejected by men"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This may be an allusion to v. 7, which is from the Septuagint of Ps. 118:22. The stone is disapproved by "the builders," which may refer to the Jewish leadership, but in Peter it is widened to all unbelieving humans. This term, from *apo* and *dokimazō*, means the testing of someone or something to find if it is genuine. The Jews continued to reject Jesus as the Messiah and this rejection became a state of spiritual blindness (cf. Mark 8:31; Matt. 6:23).

▣ **"but is choice and precious in the sight of God"** This is in direct contrast to the previous phrase. The term "choice" is literally "elect" in the sense of "foreordained" (cf. 1:2,20). A rejected (crucified or unreceived) Messiah has always been God's only plan of redemption (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Eph. 1:11).

**2:5 "as living stones"** The NT uses several corporate metaphors to describe the church.

1. a vine (John 15:5)
2. a flock (John 10:16)
3. a bride (i.e., a family, cf. Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7, 21:9)
4. a body (Eph. 1:22-23, I Cor. 12)
5. a family (Rom. 8:15-17; I Tim. 3:15)
6. a city (Heb. 11:10,16; 12:22, 13:14; Rev. 2:2,10)
7. here, a temple (cf. I Cor. 3:9,16; 6:19)

▣ **"are being built up as a spiritual house"** This is probably a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, although in form it could be a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the same VERB used in Matt. 16:18 to describe the church being built on the rock of personal faith (i.e., Peter as an example). The entire context is continuing to develop the metaphor of v. 4. Jesus is the new Temple (cf. John 2:18-22). Believers in Christ are the true priesthood. The unbelieving Jews have stumbled over (cf. vv. 7-8) the very stones on which YHWH built His spiritual Temple—(1) Jesus and (2) the Church (cf. I Tim. 3:15). Only those who have faith in Christ can function in God's spiritual temple, offering spiritually acceptable sacrifices (i.e., holy self-giving lives, cf. 1:14-16; Rom. 12:1-2).



## SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

This term *oikodomeō* and its other forms are used often by Paul. Literally it means “to build a house” (cf. Matt. 7:24), but it came to be used metaphorically for:

1. Christ’s body, the church, I Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21; 4:16
2. building up
  - a. weak brothers, Rom. 15:1
  - b. neighbors, Rom. 15:2
  - c. one another, Eph. 4:29; I Thess. 5:11
  - d. the saints for ministry, Eph. 4:11
3. we build up or edify by
  - a. love, I Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16
  - b. limiting personal freedoms, I Cor. 10:23-24
  - c. avoiding speculations, I Tim. 1:4
  - d. limiting speakers in worship services (singers, teachers, prophets, tongue speakers, and interpreters), I Cor. 14:3-4,12
4. all things should edify
  - a. Paul’s authority, II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10
  - b. summary statements in Rom. 14:19 and I Cor. 14:26

▣ **“for a holy priesthood”** Peter is using the names of God’s OT people, Israel, to describe the church (cf. Exod. 19:5; I Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6). In the OT YHWH promised through Eve’s offspring to redeem all mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). YHWH called Abram (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) to call a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6) to reach all the world (cf. Gen. 12:3 and Exod. 19:5). Israel failed in this task (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38). Therefore, God appointed a new people of faith (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) to reach the world (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; I Pet. 2:9).

Martin Luther used the authority of the Bible and the Pauline truth of justification by grace through faith to reject the traditions of the Catholic Church. He coined the phrase “the priesthood of the believer” (SINGULAR). Western individualism has taken this slogan and turned it to a license for personal freedom in belief and lifestyle. But this concept is corporate, not individual (i.e., notice the PLURAL PRONOUNS in vv. 5,7,9). It is gospel-proclamation focused, not personal-freedom focused. Believers have been given Israel’s world-wide evangelistic assignment (cf. Rom. 15:16; Heb. 13:15-16). To view the priesthood as meaning that we have direct access to God through Christ is true, but this is not the purpose of the metaphor. A priest stands between a needy people and a holy God. He advocates not his own position, but the needs of the people. The NT affirms the priesthood of believers (PLURAL, corporate) as they bring a lost world to faith in Christ.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

- A. Paul’s plural metaphors
  1. body
  2. field
  3. building
- B. The term “saint” is always PLURAL (except Phil. 4:21, but even there it is also corporate)
- C. The Reformation emphasis of Martin Luther on the “priesthood of the believer” is not truly biblical. It is the priesthood of believers (cf. Exod. 19:6; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6).
- D. Each believer is gifted for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7)
- E. Only in cooperation can the people of God be effective. Ministry is corporate (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

▣ **“to offer up spiritual sacrifices”** After the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Jews accentuated the OT passages which advocate non-animal sacrifices (cf. Ps. 50:14, 51:27, 69:30-31, 107:22, 141:2; Hos. 14:2). Hebrews 13:5 reflects this type of Christian sacrifice. In context this refers to believers living holy and self-giving lives from chapter 1 (esp. vv. 14-16; Heb. 13:15-16).

**2:6 “A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE”** This is a quote from Isa. 28:16. This concept of the Messiah as a rock or stone is recurrent in the OT (cf. Ps. 118:22; Dan. 2:34-35; Isa. 8:14, 28:16). These OT passages are often quoted in the NT (cf.

Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; I Cor. 10:4; Eph. 2:22; I Pet. 2:6-8) to refer to Jesus as God's promised One. Peter also used it in his sermon in Acts 4:11. See note at 2:4b. See Special Topic: Cornerstone at Mark 12:10.



**NASB** "AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED"  
**NKJV** "AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY O MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME"  
**NRSV** "AND WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME"  
**TEV** "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED"  
**NJB** "NO ONE WHO RELIES ON THIS WILL BE BROUGHT TO DISGRACE"

This phrase is from the LXX of Isa. 28:16. Notice the invitation is open to all (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). This is a DOUBLE NEGATIVE, "never, no never, be disappointed" or "ashamed." For "believes" see Special Topic at Mark 1:15.

F. F. Bruce, *answers to Questions* (p. 158) points out the difference between the Septuagint and the Masoretic Hebrew texts.

1. The LXX – "will not be disappointed" (NASB) or "brought to disgrace" (NJB) is the VERB *yēbōsh*
2. The MT – "will not be disturbed" (NASB, margin), "in a hurry" is the VERB *yahish*

On page 157 Bruce comments that NT authors probably quoted the version in common use in the early church unless they had a special theological reason to depart from it and use another one. The general thrust of a passage is the key to the concept of inspiration, not a fight over each and every individual word. Humans have been given a trustworthy revelation!

**2:7 "THE BUILDERS"** The Jewish Targums (Aramaic translation with commentary) use this term as a title for the Scribes. This is a quote from Ps. 118:22. Jesus uses this same OT quote in His parable of the wicked tenant farmers in Matt. 21:42. This parable described the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day. It is uncertain whether Jesus' strong words of judgment related to (1) His rejecting the concept of non-Aaronic Jewish leadership (i.e., Annas and Caiaphas) who purchased their positions from Rome or (2) His rejecting all Jewish people (i.e., Israel) who refuse to believe in Him (cf. Rom. 9-11).

**2:8 "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"** This is a quote from Isa. 8:14. It is also quoted in Rom. 9:32, where it refers to Jesus. The special stone has been rejected and becomes the object of destruction!

▣ **"they are disobedient"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. They (unbelievers of Peter's day, both Jews and Gentiles) continue to be disobedient because they reject Jesus as the Suffering Messiah. They have rejected both Jesus' preaching and that of His Apostles (cf. 1:24,25). They have rejected the eternal word (i.e., the gospel, cf. 1:22-2:2).



**NASB** "and to this *doom* they were also appointed"  
**NKJV** "to which they also were appointed"  
**NRSV** "as they were destined to do"  
**TEV** "such was God's will for them"

Calvinists use this verse and Rom. 9:22; I Thess. 5:9 to assert that God chose some to salvation and some to damnation. However, verses like John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9 show this cannot be true. God's election is primarily for holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10); for Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:29).

This verse reminds me of Isa. 6:9-13. God's covenantal people had the light they needed to respond appropriately to Him, but they would not. This continual rejection issued in hard hearts that could not respond. Only judgment was possible. The God of time and history knows what humans will do but allows them to do it and then He affirms and recognizes the consequences of their temporal/eternal choices.

It must have been very hard for these Jewish believers to deal with the Jewish rejection of Jesus. How could this happen? These early believers began to read the Scriptures for clues to this surprising unbelief.

1. Isaiah 6:9-10; 8:14-15; 43:8
2. Jeremiah 5:21; 7
3. Matt. 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-12
4. Luke 2:34; 20:9-18
5. Romans 9-11
6. I Corinthians 1:23

The following quote is from F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 196-197, about "election" vs. "selection."

"Are 'election to salvation' and 'election to damnation' correlative terms?"

In certain theological systems they are, but it is important to test all theological systems by Scripture, and to remember that, when the teaching of Scripture is systemized, something is usually left out in the process. The term 'election' has become so involved in theological controversy that the sense of the Biblical teaching on the subject might be better grasped if we used a non-theological word like 'selection' in its place. Christ selected twelve men to

be apostles (Luke 6:13); He selected Saul of Tarsus to be a ‘chosen vessel’ (Acts 9:15); but His selection of these men for a special purpose implies no disparagement of others who were not so selected. God selected Israel from among the nations (Acts 13:17)—to the great benefit of the other nations, not to their disadvantage. When the election of the people of God in this age is in question, it is not so much their ‘election to salvation’ as their election to holiness that is emphasized. This is so, for example, in Eph. 1:4 and I Pet. 1:1f; and similarly, in Rom. 8:29, the purpose for which God foreordained those whom He foreknew was that they should be ‘conformed to the image of his Son.’ In none of these places is there any suggestion of ‘election to damnation’ as a correlative. We should beware of generalizing from such particular references as those in Rom. 9:22 (‘vessels of wrath made for destruction’) and I Pet. 2:8 ‘they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do’). The general analogy of Biblical teaching on this subject indicates that some are chosen or selected by God—not in order that others, apart from them, may be left in perdition, but in order that others, through them, may be blessed.”

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup>But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup>for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.**

**2:9 “But you”** Notice the PLURAL “you” and the contrast. The author uses a composite allusion from Exod. 19:6 and then 19:5.

▣ **“A CHOSEN RACE”** This same descriptive title is found in Deut. 7:6; 10:15; Isa. 43:20-21. Chosen for ministry! This is an OT title for elect servants.

▣ **“A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD”** This title is found in Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:60; 66:21. As Israel was chosen to bring the knowledge of YHWH to the world, now the church is called to inform and bring needy, sinful people to YHWH.

▣ **“A HOLY NATION”** This same title is found in Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19. Israel was called to be uniquely holy and thus reveal a holy God (cf. Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16) to a fallen world.

▣ **“A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION”** This same descriptive title is found in Exod. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Mal. 3:17. This passage speaks of the church as spiritual Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16). These OT titles for the people of God are now applied to the NT Body of Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:29, 6:16; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Rev. 1:6). In some ways the church has replaced Israel, as in the world mission mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“may proclaim the excellencies of Him”** The purpose of God’s people is to witness to the greatness of the one true creator/redeemer God! They are chosen and equipped to live and speak the gospel.

▣ **“who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”** Darkness and light are biblical metaphors of sin, rebellion, and evil versus hope, truth, healing, and goodness (cf. John 1:4-5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36,46; Acts 26:18; II Cor. 4:6; I John 1:5; 2:8-9,11). As the previous phrase might be an allusion to Isa. 42:12, this phrase may allude to Isa. 42:16.

**2:10 “for you once were NOT A PEOPLE”** This introduces a quote from Hos. 1:10 and 2:23. The key term is *lo ammi* (the name of one of Hosea’s children), which originally referred to Israel not being God’s people because of their idolatry and covenant-breaking lifestyles. They were (1) trusting in political alliances and not in God and (2) worshiping Ba’al using YHWH’s name.

▣ **“but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD”** This is a further quote from Hos. 2:23. This passage in its OT context affirms that though Israel had sinned and departed from their covenant God, He was ready to reestablish them to covenant status (i.e., marriage metaphor). This same loving and forgiving God now holds out His hand to wayward Gentiles.

This use of Hosea that originally addressed the wayward northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century B.C. is now used by Peter to relate to pagan Gentiles. This extension of OT texts from a Jew/Gentile context to an unbeliever/believer context characterizes the NT! Believing Gentiles are now included in the covenant people of God (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

▣ **“you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY”** The prophet Hosea had three children to whom he gave prophetic names

1. a boy named *Jezreel*, meaning “God makes fruitful”
2. a girl named *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning “no compassion”
3. a boy named *Lo-Ammi*, meaning “not my people”

As the first part of v. 10 uses the third child’s name, the last part of v. 10 uses the second child’s name (cf. Hos. 1:6; 2:20,23). God fully receives sinners because He has compassion for them.

The grammatical forms found in v. 10 are helpful in expressing the theological point. There was a stated objection on the part of the Gentiles, brought about by the agency of Satan (i.e., PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), but the covenant God has decisively broken into history by means of His Messiah and brought about a new day of opportunity for covenant inclusion (i.e., AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). This truth is similar to the mystery of God's plan, once hidden, but now disclosed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. <sup>12</sup>Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

**2:11 “aliens”** This OT term speaks of non-residents with limited rights living in a place that is not their home, like Abraham (cf. Gen. 23:4; Ps. 39:12; Heb. 11:13; I Pet. 2:11). Here it is used metaphorically for believers living in the fallen world system.

▣ **“strangers”** This term implies a short stay (cf. 1:1,17). This alludes to the fact that believers are citizens of a heavenly realm, not this time-space physical reality only. We are creatures of flesh and spirit (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

▣ **“to abstain”** This is literally “continue to hold yourself back from” (i.e., PRESENT MIDDLE INFINITIVE). Believers must continue to struggle with sin and temptation (cf. Romans 7). The battle with evil does not cease at salvation (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). In many ways it intensifies. When one believes in and receives Christ he/she is indwelt by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9) and given the divine nature (cf. II Pet. 1:4). However, this does not mean that the old sin nature is removed. It is made inoperative by Christ's finished work on our behalf (cf. Romans 6, see Special Topic: Null and Void).

The rabbis say that in every human's heart is a black and a white dog. The one you feed the most becomes the biggest. Believers face the continuing choice of seeking the good, dwelling on righteousness, walking in light, or reactivating the old sin nature! Believers are citizens of two realms (fallen human nature and the Spirit, cf. Rom. 8:5-17); two ages (i.e., current evil age and the age of righteousness, cf. Titus 2:11-14); which one exerts the most influence?

▣ **“from fleshly lusts”** The body itself is not evil (Greek thought), but it is the battleground of self-centered and Satanic temptations (cf. Romans 6-8; Gal. 5:16-24).

▣ **“which wage war”** this is a present MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This war is described in James 4:1-4.

**2:12 “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. Unbelievers are watching! How believers live and react to the common struggles of life are loud witnesses to all who know them. Often our lives speak louder than our words!

▣ **“slander you as evildoers”** The early Christians were accused of

1. cannibalism (because of the Lord's Supper terminology)
2. incest (because they loved each other)
3. atheism (because their God was invisible)
4. treason (because they would not serve in the army or pledge allegiance to Caesar)
5. immorality (possibly the holy kiss)

This slander of The Way (cf. 24:14; Acts 28:22) seems to have developed in the pro-Emperor eastern provinces or the Roman Empire (Asia Minor).

▣ **“they may because of your good deeds. . .glorify God”** How we live as Christians reflects the God we claim to know and serve (cf. 2:15; 3:16; Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15; Titus 2:7-8). The SUBJUNCTIVE mood introduces a contingency. God's glory is our highest calling and evangelistic mandate (cf. 4:11,16).

▣ **“in the day of visitation”** This refers to any time that God draws near, either for blessing or for judgment (cf. Isa. 10:3; Jer. 8:12; 10:15; 11:23; 23:12; 46:21; 48:44; 50:27; 51:18; Hos. 9:7; Mic. 7:4). It can be temporal or eschatological (cf. Luke 19:44). Some see this as relating to believers on trial, but in context it seems to refer to any opportunity for the unsaved to hear and respond to Jesus as Savior before they face Him as Judge.

## A BRIEF OUTLINE TO THE PRACTICAL SECTION OF I PETER

- A. Submission to government and community (2:13-17)
- B. Submission to earthly masters (2:18-25)
- C. Submission in the Christian home (3:1-7)
- D. Submission amidst persecution (3:8-22)

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:13-17

<sup>13</sup>Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup>or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. <sup>15</sup>For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. <sup>16</sup>Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. <sup>17</sup>Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

**2:13 “submit”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE, but NASB and NKJV translate it as a MIDDLE (cf. 2:18). “Yourselves” is not in the Greek text. It implies that they are to make a decisive choice to submit (cf. 2:18; 3:1). This is a military term used for the chain of command. It literally means “to arrange oneself under authority.” This is a common theme of Peter (cf. 2:13,18; 3:1,5,22; 5:5). Submission does not imply inequality, for Jesus is described by this term. It is an attitude of service under authority. In Eph. 5:21 it is one of the five characteristics of the Spirit-filled life (mutual submission to one another in Christ).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION (*HYPOTASSŌ*)

The Septuagint uses this term to translate ten different Hebrew words. Its basic OT meaning was “to order” or “the right of command.” This is picked up in the Septuagint (LXX).

- 1. God commands (cf. Lev. 10:1; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8)
- 2. Moses commands (cf. Exod. 36:6; Deut. 27:1)
- 3. kings command (cf. II Chr. 31:13)

In the NT this sense continues as in Acts 10:48, where an Apostle commands. However, new connotations are developed in the NT.

- 1. a voluntary aspect develops (often MIDDLE VOICE)
- 2. this self-limiting action can be seen in Jesus submitting to the Father (cf. Luke 2:51)
- 3. believers submit to aspects of culture so that the gospel will not be adversely affected
  - a. other believers (cf. Eph. 5:21)
  - b. believing wives (cf. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1)
  - c. believers to pagan governments (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13)

Believers act out of motives of love, for God, for Christ, for the Kingdom, for the good of others.

Like *agapaō* (love) the church filled this term with new meaning based on the needs of the Kingdom and the needs of others. This term takes on a new nobility of selflessness, not based on a command, but on a new relationship to a self-giving God and His Messiah. Believers obey and submit for the good of the whole and the blessing of the family of God.

▣ **“for the Lord’s sake”** This is the motive for all of our actions (cf. 4:11; I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17; Eph. 6:5).

▣ **“to every human institution”** For “institution” see Special Topic at Mark 10:6. From what follows, this is an admonition to submit to governmental or civil authority, much like Rom. 13:1-7 and Titus 3:1. This is all the more significant in light of the governmental persecution these believers faced. It is uncertain whether the persecution was Jewish, pagan, local government, or Empire wide. Our strongest witness to the power of the gospel is in times of persecution. Our attitude, words, and actions when unfairly treated cause unbelievers to take notice.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Definition – Government is humanity organizing itself to provide and secure sensed needs (i.e., Genesis 4 and 11). Humans are social beings (even before the Fall (cf. Gen. 2:18). Families, tribes, nations give us community.
- B. Purpose – God has willed that order is preferable to anarchy.
  - 1. The Mosaic legislation, particularly the Decalog, is God’s will for mankind in society. It balances worship and life.
  - 2. No form or structure of government is advocated in Scripture, although ancient Israel’s theocracy is the anticipated form of heaven. Neither democracy nor capitalism is a biblical truth. Christians are to act appropriately in whatever governmental system they find themselves. The purpose of the Christian is evangelism and ministry, not revolution. All governments are transitory!
- C. Origin of human government
  - 1. Roman Catholicism has asserted that human government is an innate need, even before the Fall. Aristotle seems to have first assured this premise. He says, “man is a political animal” and by this he meant that government “exists for the promotion of the good life.”
  - 2. Protestantism, especially Martin Luther, has asserted that human government is inherent in the Fall. He calls it “the Kingdom of God’s left hand.” He said that “God’s way to control bad men is to put bad men in control.”
  - 3. Karl Marx has asserted that government is the means by which a few elite keep the masses under control. For him, government and religion play a similar role.

### **II. BIBLICAL MATERIAL**

- A. Old Testament
  - 1. Israel is the pattern which will be utilized in heaven. In ancient Israel YHWH was King. Theocracy is the term used to describe God’s direct rule (cf. I Sam. 8:4-9).
  - 2. God’s sovereignty in human government can be clearly seen in His appointing:
    - a. all kings, Dan. 2:21; 4:17,24-25
    - b. the Messianic reign, Dan. 2:44-45
    - c. Nebuchadnezzar (neo-Babylon), Jer. 27:6; Dan. 5:28
    - d. Cyrus II (Persia), II Chr. 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Isa. 44:28; 45:1
  - 3. God’s people are to be submissive and respectful even to invading and occupying governments:
    - a. Daniel 1-4, Nebuchadnezzar (neo-Babylon)
    - b. Daniel 5, Belshazzar (neo-Babylon)
    - c. Daniel 6, Darius (Persia)
    - d. Ezra and Nehemiah (Persia)
  - 4. Restored Judah was to pray for Cyrus and his descendants’ reign
    - a. Ezra 6:10; 7:23
    - b. Jews were to pray for civil authority, Mishnah, Avot. 3:2
- B. New Testament
  - 1. Jesus showed respect to human governments
    - a. Matthew 17:24-27; He paid the Temple tax (religious and civil authorities were meant to be one, cf. I Pet. 2:17)
    - b. Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26, He advocated a place for the Roman tax and thereby Roman civil authority
    - c. John 19:11, God allows civil authority
  - 2. Paul’s words related to human governments
    - a. Romans 13:1-5, believers must submit to civil authorities for they are established by God
    - b. Romans 13:6-7, believers must pay taxes and honor civil authorities
    - c. I Timothy 2:1-3, believers must pray for civil authorities
    - d. Titus 3:1, believers must be subject to civil authorities

3. Peter's words related to human governments
  - a. Acts 4:1-31; 5:29, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (this shows biblical precedent for civil disobedience)
  - b. I Peter 2:13-17, believers must submit to civil authorities for the good of society and for evangelism
4. John's words related to human governments
  - a. Revelation 17, the whore of Babylon stands for human government organized and functioning apart from God
  - b. Revelation 18, the whore of Babylon is destroyed

### III. CONCLUSION

- A. Human government (in a fallen world) is ordained by God. This is not "the divine right of Kings," but the divine task of government. No one form is advocated above another.
- B. It is a religious duty for believers to obey and pray for civil authority.
- C. It is proper for believers to support human government by taxes with a proper reverent attitude.
- D. Human government is for the purpose of civil order. They are God's servants for this task.
- E. Human government is not ultimate. It is limited in its authority. Believers must act for their conscience's sake in rejecting civil authority when it oversteps its divinely appointed bounds. As Augustine has asserted in *The City of God*, we are citizens of two realms, one temporal and one eternal (cf. Phil. 3:20). We have responsibility in both, but God's kingdom is ultimate! There is both an individual and corporate focus in our responsibility to God.
- F. We should encourage believers in a democratic system to actively participate in the process of government and to implement, when possible, the teachings of Scripture.
- G. Social change must be preceded by individual conversion. There is no real lasting eschatological hope in government. All human governments, though willed and used by God, are sinful expressions of human organization apart from God. This concept is expressed in the Johannine usage of the term "the world" (i.e., I John 2:15-17).

▣ **"as the one in authority"** This term in Classical Greek meant "the human founder of a city"; however, in the NT it is always used of God's authority (cf. Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; I Tim. 2:1-7; Titus 3:1-8), which is often given to human organizations. God prefers order over anarchy.

**2:14 "or to governors as sent by him"** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. God is in control of all things. This text does not teach "the divine right of Kings," but affirms that God supports law and order (i.e., a stable society) over anarchy.

The PRONOUN "him" could refer to (1) God or (2) the governor.

▣ **"for the punishment of evildoers"** Government has the God-given authority to maintain order and to restrain and punish disorder. Capital punishment is one form of this mandate (cf. Rom. 13:4; Acts 25:11).

**2:15 "For such is the will of God"** See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

### JOHN'S GOSPEL

- Jesus came to do the Father's will (cf. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38)
- to raise up on the last day all whom the Father gave the Son (cf. 6:39)
- that all believe in the Son (cf. 6:29,40)
- answered prayer related to doing God's will (cf. 9:31 and I John 5:14)

### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- doing God's will is crucial (cf. Matt. 7:21)
- doing God's will makes one brother and sister with Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:50; Mark 3:35)
- it is not God's will for any to perish (cf. Matt. 18:14; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
- Calvary was the Father's will for Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:42; Luke 22:42)

## PAUL'S LETTERS

- the maturity and service of all believers (cf. Rom. 12:1-2)
- believers delivered from this evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4)
- God's will was His redemptive plan (cf. Eph. 1:5,9,11)
- believers experiencing and living the Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:17-18)
- believers filled with the knowledge of God (cf. Col. 1:9)
- believers made perfect and complete (cf. Col. 4:12)
- believers sanctified (cf. I Thess. 4:3)
- believers giving thanks in all things (cf. I Thess. 5:18)

## PETER'S LETTERS

- believers doing right (i.e., submitting to civil authorities) and thereby silencing foolish men, providing an opportunity for evangelism (cf. I Pet. 2:15)
- believers suffering (cf. I Pet. 3:17; 4:19)
- believers not living self-centered lives (cf. I Pet. 4:2)

## JOHN'S LETTERS

- believers abiding forever (cf. I John 2:17)
- believers key to answered prayer (cf. I John 5:14)

▣ **“silence”** This is literally “muzzle” (cf. Mark 1:25, 4:39).

▣ **“the ignorance”** This refers to someone who lacks spiritual discernment (cf. I Cor. 15:34).

▣ **“of foolish men”** This term is listed in a series of sins in Mark 7:22. It describes unbelieving Jewish teachers in Rom. 3:20, but it is used to describe believers in Eph. 5:17. Therefore, it implies a lazy mental state that affects both the saved and the unsaved. Here it refers to uninformed pagans who are accusing believers of things which are not true (cf. 2:12).

**2:16 “Act as free men”** This is an implied IMPERATIVE (cf. NASB, TEV, NIV). It is in contrast to the pagans who are slaves to sin. Believers have the choice. Jesus has freed them from the mastery of sin (cf. Romans 6), but often they use their new freedom to choose sin again.

▣ **“do not use your freedom as a coverage for evil”** This is literally “having” (a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) negated, used as an IMPERATIVE. How often our freedom becomes a license (cf. I Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13) instead of a sacrificial living witness (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). Freedom always brings responsibility but be careful of legalism or ritualism (cf. I Cor. 8-10; Col. 2:16-23). Believers are now free from sin to serve God (cf. Romans 6) and each other (cf. I Cor. 9:19-23).

▣ **“but use it as bondslaves of God”** Believers have been freed from sin and are now free to serve God (cf. Rom. 6:22).

**2:17 “Honor all people”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, the first of four stark summary commands in v. 17. This means to recognize the worth of all humans in God's sight (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; John 3:16) and to live so as to attract them to faith in Christ (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“love the brotherhood”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Christians must continue to love each other (cf. 1:22; John 13:34, 15:12,17; Rom. 12:10; I Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; I John 2:7-8, 3:11, 23; 4:1,11; II John 5). Love is the true evidence that we know God, that we have trusted Christ, and that we are guided by the Spirit. It is the family characteristic of God. Believers are to love all humans for the sake of the gospel and love other Christians because they are part of the family of God.

▣ **“fear God”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE (cf. Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Pro. 1:7;15:33). We get the English word “phobia” from this Greek word. It is used in the sense of awe and respect. All believers' actions must issue from their relationship with and respect for God!

▣ **“honor the king”** These last two PRESENT IMPERATIVES may be an allusion to Pro. 24:21. Remember in Peter's day that the Emperor was Nero (cf. 2:13)!



## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-25

<sup>18</sup>Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. <sup>19</sup>For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. <sup>21</sup>For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup>WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; <sup>23</sup>and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup>and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

**2:18 “Servants, be submissive to your masters”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE (see note and Special Topic at 2:13). Believing slaves respect their earthly masters because they respect God! This even refers to those unbelieving masters who are unfair and cruel or Christian slave masters who are acting inappropriately. In our day an application of this admonition would relate to Christian employers and Christian employees. This is similar to Paul’s teachings in Eph. 6:5-9. Notice #3 in the Special Topic below.

This is a good place to discuss the cultural aspect of biblical interpretation. If the gospel had challenged (1) the first century Greek-Roman patriarchal culture or (2) its slave culture, it would have been rejected and destroyed by first century society. By preaching the gospel both of these barriers fell in time! The Bible must always be interpreted in its historical setting and then the inspired truths applied to our day and culture with the same power and impact. It does not mean that we try to reproduce the first century culture as God’s will for every society in every age. The goal is the preaching of the eternal truth of the gospel which impacts individuals and ultimately society itself.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S ADMONITIONS TO SLAVES

1. Be content, but if an opportunity for freedom avails itself, take it (I Cor. 7:21-24)
2. In Christ there is no slave or free (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; cf. I Cor. 12:13)
3. Work as unto the Lord; He will repay (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; cf. I Pet. 2:18-20)
4. In Christ slaves become brothers (I Tim. 6:2; Philemon vv. 16-17)
5. Godly slaves bring honor to God (I Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9)

### Paul’s admonition to slave owners:

Christian slaves and slave owners have the same Master; therefore, they should treat each other with respect (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1)

### 2:19

NASB “For this *finds* favor”  
NKJV “For this *is* commendable”  
NRSV “For it is a credit to you”  
TEV “God will bless you for this”  
NJB “You see, there is merit”

This refers to God’s approval of submission even amidst persecution, when this suffering is related to our Christian convictions and trust in Christ (cf. 3:14,17; 4:13-14,16). “Favor” is the Greek term *charis* (grace) used in its non-theological sense.

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Christian slaves were suffering under cruel masters for Christ’s sake.

▣ **“conscience”** See note at I Peter 3:16.

**2:20 “for what credit is there”** This is a term for honor connected to one’s reputation (cf. Luke 6:32-34). It is from the Greek VERB *kaleō*, which means to call. Therefore, it refers to calling praise, honor, or glory on someone.

▣ **“if”** There are two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in this verse, which are assumed to be true. The first CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is used in a negative sense and the second in a positive sense. God is pleased when believers suffer unfairly, but patiently, for being believers (cf. 1:29; 3:24,27; 4:12-16; Matt. 5:10-16).

**2:21 “For you have been called for this purpose”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. In context this phrase means that believers were called to emulate Jesus’ life, which brings glory to God and salvation to mankind. This is a call to submissiveness on behalf of all believers which will bring spiritual maturity and a powerful gospel witness.

That believers are called by God to suffering is a startling statement, especially to a western culture which thinks of Christianity in terms of (1) “what’s in it for me” or (2) a health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. The persecution of believers is a real possibility in a fallen world (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3-4; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 3:14; 4:12-19).

▣ **“Christ also suffered”** The suffering of the Messiah was a surprise to the Jews who expected a conquering military Messiah. There are specific hints in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53). Jesus Himself showed (1) His Apostles (cf. 16:21; 17:12,22-23; 20:18-19) and (2) the early church these prophetic passages (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

His suffering and death were an integral part of the apostolic preaching of the early church in Acts called the *Kerygma* (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:13-14,18; 17:3; 26:23). See Special Topic at 1:11.

There are several key theological truths connected with His suffering.

1. Christ is our example (v. 21)
2. Christ bore our sins on the cross (v. 24)
3. Christ’s work caused us to die to sin and live for God (v. 24)
4. Christ is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (v. 25)

The term “suffered” (*epathen*) is found in MSS P<sup>72</sup>, A, B, and C, but other ancient MSS, P<sup>81</sup>, & have “died” (*apethanen*). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the first reading an “A” rating (certain), assuming that “died” has been transposed by copyists from 3:18.

▣ **“an example”** The NT gives three reasons why Christ came:

1. To be the vicarious, substitutionary atonement. He, the innocent, blameless (cf. 2:22) Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29), offered Himself on our behalf (cf. 2:24).
2. To be the full revelation of the Father (cf. John 1:1-14; 14:8-9).
3. To be an example for believers (cf. 2:21) to emulate. He is the ideal Israelite, the perfect man, what humanity should have been, could be, and one day, will be.

**2:22 “WHO COMMITTED NO SIN”** This is a quote from Isa. 53:9. This concept is also expressed in John 8:46, 14:30; Luke 23:41; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15, 7:26-27; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; 3:18, I John 3:5. He could die on our behalf because He did not have to die for His own sin!

▣ **“NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH”** Jesus was the ideal Israelite (cf. Isa. 53:9 and Zeph. 3:13).

**2:23 “while being reviled, He did not revile in return”** There is a series of three IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVES, which mean repeated action in past time. The first one is an allusion to Isa. 53:7. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in His trials before Caiaphas, Annas the High Priest, Pilate, and Herod.

▣ **“while suffering, He uttered no threats”** He did speak, but in forgiveness to all those involved in His death (cf. Luke 23:34).

▣ **“but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”** This entrusting was the normal attitude of Jesus’ life. It is seen so powerfully in Luke 22:42 and 23:46.

**2:24 “He Himself bore our sins”** This is obviously from Isa. 53:4,11,12. The term “bore” is used of a sacrifice in Lev. 14:20 and James 2:21. This is the essence of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement (cf. Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:6,8,10; II Cor. 5:21).

▣ **“in His body on the cross”** Although there is no specific Gnostic element connected to I Peter (an early Christian/Greek philosophy asserted that Jesus was not truly human, cf. Col.; I Tim.; I John). This text is another powerful affirmation of the true humanity and physical death of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Col. 1:22).

The phrase “on the cross” may have a connection to Deut. 21:23, where anyone who was impaled on a stake (i.e., tree) instead of being properly buried was cursed by God. By Jesus’ day the rabbis had interpreted this as including Roman crucifixion. Jesus was accused of blasphemy which, according to the Mosaic Law, demanded stoning. Why then did the Jewish leaders want Him crucified, which required Roman approval and ceremonial defilement for them before the Passover? Some have said they

did this because the Jews did not have the authority under Roman law to put someone to death, but what about Stephen in Acts 7?

I think they wanted Jesus crucified to suggest that this messianic pretender was cursed by God! But this is exactly what happened. Jesus became the curse for us (cf. Gal. 3:13). The OT itself had become a curse (cf. Col. 2:14). It states that the soul that sins must die (cf. II Kgs. 14:6; Ezek. 18:4,20). But all humans have sinned (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; Gal. 3:22). Therefore, all deserve to die and were under its death penalty. Jesus the sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29) bore the sin of the entire fallen world (cf. Rom. 5:12-21)

▣ **“that we might die to sin and live to righteousness”** This is a purpose (*hina*) clause. This is the goal of Christianity (cf. Rom. 6:20; Gal. 2:20). It is the restoration of the image of God in humans which restores intimate fellowship with God.

▣ **“by His wounds you were healed”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. In Isa. 53:4-6 this speaks of our spiritual healing, not that physical healing. I do not deny physical healing as an ongoing act of a gracious God, but I do deny that it is a promised aspect of the atonement of Christ. In the OT sin was characterized as physical illness (cf. Isa. 1:5-6; Ps. 103:3). This is a metaphor for the forgiveness of sin, not a promise that if believers have enough faith God will heal every physical problem of every believer.

For a good discussion of Isa. 53:4 and its use in Matt. 8:17, F. F. Bruce’s *Answers to Questions*, pp. 44-45, is very helpful.

**2:25 “for you were continually straying”** This is an allusion to Isa. 53:6. It is an IMPERFECT PASSIVE PERIPHRASTIC, which refers to repeated action in past time or the beginning of an action. Does this refer to

1. OT Jews (cf. Rom. 3:9-18, which is a series of OT quotes)
2. all humanity
3. Gentile believers who were succumbing to persecution (i.e., possibly denying Jesus at trial)
4. believers, Jews and Gentiles, who were losing the daily battle to the sin nature

▣ **“but now you have returned”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE which implies a decisive return by the agency of God, Christ, or the Spirit (cf. TEV “you have been brought back”). Most English versions translate it as a MIDDLE (cf. NASB, NRSV, NJB, NIV). In the OT “turn” or “return” (*shub*) is often used for God’s people repenting and coming back to Him.

▣ **“Shepherd”** This title is used of God (cf. Ps. 23:1, Ezek. 34) and here of Jesus as in John 10:1-18 and Heb. 13:20. It connotes tender, thoughtful, continuous care. This title may even reflect Peter’s discussion with Jesus in John 21 (cf. 5:1-3).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “Guardian”

NKJV “Overseer”

TEV “Keeper”

Here the term *episkopos* is used of Jesus, but usually it refers to local church leaders. The term translates as “bishop” or “overseer” and has a Greek city/state background, while the synonymous term “elder” (*presbuteros*) has a Hebrew tribal background. These terms are usually used synonymously to refer to the NT role of pastor (cf. Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Do all Christians start out as baby Christians? Why?
2. Why does Peter use so many OT titles to describe NT believers?
3. What is the significance of believers being called “stones?”
4. Why is our lifestyle so important?
5. Why should we as Christians obey governmental authority?
6. Why did Christianity not attack slavery?
7. What was Peter’s advice to those in unfair circumstances?
8. What is the significance of Christ’s death?

# I PETER 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Wives and Husbands	Submission to Husbands	The Obligations of Christians (2:11-4:11)	Wives and Husbands	The Obligations of Christians: in Marriage
3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6
	A Word to Husbands			
3:7	3:7	3:7	3:7	3:7
Suffering for Righteousness' Sake	Called to Blessing		Suffering for Doing Right	The Obligations of Christians: Love the Brothers
3:8-12	3:8-12	3:8-12	3:8-12	3:8-12
	Suffering for Right and Wrong			The Obligations of Christians: in Persecution
3:13-22	3:13-17	3:13-22	3:13-22	3:13-17
	Christ's Suffering and Ours			The Resurrection and the Descent into Hell
	3:18-4:6			3:18-22

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v of the introductory article on Good Bible Reading)

*FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup>In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup>as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. <sup>3</sup>Your adornment must not be *merely* external braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; <sup>4</sup>but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup>For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; <sup>6</sup>just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

**3:1 “In the same way”** This points back to his admonition to the Christian citizens (cf. 2:13) and Christian slaves (cf. 2:18).

▣ **“you wives, be submissive”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE like 2:18. This is a military term which means “to arrange oneself under authority” (cf. Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Titus 2:4-5). This entire chapter is related to Peter’s discussion of “submission” of believers to government (2:13-17) and believing slaves to their masters (2:18-20). Submission is not a negative term; it describes Jesus Himself. He was submissive to His earthly parents. He was submissive to His heavenly Father.

▣ **“in order that”** This is a purpose (*hina*) clause, which states the theological purpose for a wife’s submission. It is always for evangelism! Believers are to model daily the Kingdom of God (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. This context is discussing unbelieving husbands. In the first century many mixed families were prevalent because one of the partners became a believer. This is not a biblical proof-text for marrying a non-believer!

▣ **“any of them are disobedient”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies continual action. As biblical faith is an ongoing experience, so too, is unbelief!

▣ **“to the word”** In I Peter “the word” (i.e., *logos*) is a metaphor for Apostolic preaching of the gospel. Believers are born again by the word (cf. 1:23). They are to desire the spiritual or sincere milk of the word (i.e., *logikos*, cf. 2:2).

▣ **“won”** This is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This term means “to profit.” It is used of salvation in I Cor. 9:19-22. The natural goal of a believing wife is the salvation of her family. This should be the goal of all believers.

▣ **“without a word”** Her life of faith will speak louder and clearer than words! However, at some point words are needed to communicate the gospel message!

▣ **“by the behavior”** Our lifestyle often shouts louder than our words.

**3:2 “observe”** This term was used of eyewitnesses. Peter used it three times in his letters (cf. I Pet. 2:12; 3:2; II Pet. 1:16). Believers’ lives are on display. Although it is a cliché it is true that believers’ lives are the only Bible some people will ever read. Believers’ lives are the only Jesus some people will ever know. What an awesome responsibility.

▣  
NASB           **“your chaste and respectful behavior”**  
NKJV           **“your chaste conduct *accompanied by fear*”**  
NRSV           **“the purity and reverence of your lives”**  
TEV             **“pure and reverent your conduct is”**  
NJB             **“the reverence and purity of your way of life”**

Peter has used the term “fear,” understood as respect earlier, in 1:17 and 2:18 (cf. Acts 9:3; 10:2; Rom. 3:18; 13:7; Eph. 5:33; Rev. 11:18). Believers live selfless, godly, culturally acceptable lives for the purpose of Kingdom witness and evangelism.

The term “chaste” (*agnos*) is translated in several ways (pure, chaste, modest, innocent, blameless). It is used of women in II Cor. 11:2; Titus 2:5; and here.

**3:3 “Your adornment must not be *merely* external”** This is an emphasis on the inner qualities of a believer, not a prohibition against all cultural adornment. External cultural adornment can become a problem if it becomes ultimate and prideful and characterizes an evil heart (cf. Isa. 3:18-24). How one dresses is a window into the heart (cf. v. 4).

The term “adornment” is a unique usage of the term, *kosmos* (the VERB form in v. 5). This usage is where we get the English word “cosmetic.”

▣ **“braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses”** All of these refer to the expensive and elaborate hair and clothing fashions of the women in Greco-Roman first century. Believers must not desire or emulate this lust for social acceptance and social ranking based on outward ornaments. This does not imply we should wear rags, but that believers should dress in ways which are socially acceptable to their particular culture and time, but do not draw undue attention to themselves.

**3:4 “the hidden person of the heart”** This refers to the new person after salvation. The New covenant has given a new heart and spirit (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). For “heart” see Special Topic at Mark 2:6.

▣ **“the imperishable quality”** Peter has used this term of (1) God’s imperishable inheritance, which He guards for believers in heaven (i.e., 1:4) and (2) of believers being born again of imperishable seed (i.e., 1:23).

Paul uses this same term of our new resurrection bodies in I Cor. 15. and of believers’ incorruptible crown in I Cor. 9:25.

▣ **“gentle and quiet spirit”** The first term *praus* (meek, gentle) describes Jesus in Matt. 11:29 and 21:5 and is to characterize believers in the beatitudes (cf. Matt. 5:5). It is also used in 3:15 to characterize a believer’s witness.

The second term, *hēsuchia* or *hēsuchia*, is used several times in Paul’s writings to describe believers as quiet, tranquil, peaceful, or restful (cf. I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:12; I Tim. 2:2,11,12).

There is an implied contrast between the changing styles of the world (cf. v. 3) and the settled character of a redeemed life (cf. v. 4).

**3:5 “being submissive”** This is the general theme of this entire context (believers submit to civil authority, 2:13-17; believing slaves submit to masters, 2:18-20; Christ submits to the Father’s plan, 2:21-25; believing wives submit to husbands, 3:1-6). It is an observable reorientation from the Fall of Genesis 3. Believers no longer live for themselves, but for God.

**3:6 “Sarah. . .calling him Lord”** This is an OT example (i.e., Gen. 18:12) of a godly woman’s submission.

▣ **“you become her children”** Old Testament saints are often used to encourage believers (cf. Heb. 11). They are also used to show that believers are fully accepted by God by faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11; Gal. 3:7,9). We are of the faith family of Abraham and Sarah. We are the new people of God. The new Israel of faith (cf. Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9).

▣ **“if you do what is right”** See note at 2:14. The conditional element (“if”) expressed in the English translation (NASB, NKJV, TEV) is not in the Greek text, but is implied. The life of faith has observable characteristics.

▣ **“without being frightened by any fear”** This is another characteristic of the life of faith (cf. 3:6,14). This may be an allusion to Prov. 3:25 and the truth of Ps. 23:4; 27:1; and 91:5.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7**

**<sup>7</sup>You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.**

**3:7 “You husbands”** This section to believing husbands is much shorter than that addressed to believing wives; however, it reflects a radically positive balance for Peter’s day, much like Paul’s (cf. Eph. 5:21-31).

▣ **“in an understanding way”** This could refer to (1) the truths of Scripture (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-25; Gal. 3:28) or (2) being mindful of women’s unique physical structure (see note below).

▣ **“weaker vessel”** This means physically (cf. Job 4:19; 10:9; 33:6; II Cor. 4:7), not spiritually or intellectually (cf. Gal. 3:28). Some commentators relate it to social status. This same “vessel” may be used in I Thess. 4:4 as a reference to one’s wife (or an idiom of describing an eternal spirit within a physical body made from clay, cf. Gen. 2:7; 3:19).

▣ **“show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life”** This reflects the spiritual equality (i.e., co-heirs, cf. 1:4-5) of men and women (cf. Gen. 1:27; 2:18; Gal. 3:28). In some ways even now salvation removes the consequences of the Fall (cf. Gen. 3:16) and restores the mutuality between men and women of Genesis 1-2.

▣ **“so that your prayers will not be hindered”** How believing couples treat one another affects their relationship with God (cf. I Cor. 7:5).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-12**

**<sup>8</sup>To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup>For, “THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. <sup>11</sup>HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. <sup>12</sup>FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.”**

3:8

NASB “To sum up”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “Finally”

TEV “To conclude”

This is a Greek idiom (“now the end”) which means “in summation,” not of the entire letter, but of this context on submission (cf. 2:13-17,18-25; 3:1-7,8-22).

▣ “all of you be” This is addressed to the entire community of faith. There is no VERB in this list of encouraged attributes.

▣

NASB “harmonious”

NKJV “of one mind”

NRSV “unity of spirit”

TEV “the same attitude”

NJB “you should all agree among yourselves”

This is literally a compound of *homos* (one or the same) and *phrēn* (mind or thinking). The same concept is encouraged in John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:16; Phil. 1:27 and 2:2.

▣

NASB, NJB “sympathetic”

NKJV “having compassion for one another”

NRSV “sympathy”

TEV “having the same feelings”

This is literally a compound of *sun* (with) and *paschō* (to suffer). We get the English term “sympathy” from this Greek compound. In times of persecution and trials this is so important, as are the other qualities mentioned in v. 8.

▣

NASB “brotherly”

NKJV “love as brothers”

NRSV “love for one another”

TEV “love one another”

NJB “love the brothers”

This is literally a compound of *philos* (love) and *adelphos* (brother). This is, of course, the generic use of brother. Possibly a better way to express this is “show family love for all believers” (cf. Rom. 12:10; I Thess. 4:9). This reflects Jesus’ command in John 13:34; I John 3:23; 4:7-8,11-12,19-21. In Koine Greek *philos* and *agapē* were usually synonyms (compare John 3:35 and 5:20).

▣

NASB “kindhearted”

NKJV “tenderhearted”

NRSV “a tender heart”

TEV “be kind”

NJB “have compassion”

This is a compound of *eu* (good) and *splagchnon* (viscera, bowels). The ancients believed that the lower viscera (cf. Acts 1:18) were the seat of the emotions (cf. Luke 1:28; II Cor. 6:12; Phil. 1:8). This compound calls on believers to have “good feelings” toward one another (cf. Eph. 4:32).

▣

NASB “humble in spirit”

NKJV “courteous”

NRSV “a humble mind”

TEV “humble”

NJB “self-effacing”

This is a compound of *tapeinos* (humble) and *phrēn* (minded). It is used in Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2 and Phil. 2:3. This is a uniquely Christian virtue. It means the opposite of self-assertion and egocentric pride.



**3:9 “not returning evil for evil”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. This refers to true forgiveness (cf. Pro. 17:13, 20:22; Rom. 12:17, I Thess. 5:15). Remember that I Peter is written to persecuted and suffering believers, but they must respond as Christ responded to unfair treatment.

▣ **“insult for insult”** This reflects Jesus’ life (cf. 2:23).

▣ **“but giving a blessing”** This is another PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. Literally it means “to speak well of” or “eulogize” in English (cf. Matt. 5:10,12,44, 6:14-15; Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:143; I Cor. 4:12).

**3:9 “but you were called for the very purpose”** This is exactly the same truth stated in 2:21. Suffering, like Christ’s example, is the believer’s means of maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8) and witness (cf. v. 15).

▣ **“that you might inherit a blessing”** This reflects the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:28. The believer’s inheritance has been a recurrent theme (cf. 1:4-5; 3:7,9). We are family members with God and co-heirs with Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:17).

**3:10-12** This is a quote from Psalm 34, from the MT and not the Septuagint. The Psalm is also alluded to in

1. 2:3 – Ps. 34:8 (cf. Heb. 6:5)
2. 2:22 – Ps. 34:13
3. 3:10 – Ps. 34:12-13
4. 3:11 – Ps. 34:14 (cf. Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14)
5. 3:12 – Ps. 34:15-16

▣ Notice the three admonitions.

1. must keep his tongue from evil (v. 10, see Special Topic: Human Speech at Mark 7:20)
2. must turn away from evil (v. 11)
3. must seek peace and pursue it (v. 11)

This shows the human aspect of the believer’s covenant response. The reasons for believers’ actions are given in v. 12:

1. the Lord takes personal notice toward the righteous
2. the Lord hears the righteous
3. the Lord is personally against the wicked

Throughout the Psalms “the LORD” originally referred to YHWH, the covenant God of Israel, yet in this context it refers to Jesus, the bringer of the new covenant (as do 1:25 and 2:3). This is a common technique of NT authors to affirm the deity of Jesus.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-22**

<sup>13</sup>Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are blessed*. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, <sup>15</sup>but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; <sup>16</sup>and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. <sup>18</sup>For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; <sup>19</sup>in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, <sup>20</sup>who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*. <sup>21</sup>Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

**3:13 “Who is there to harm you”** This may be an allusion to Ps. 118:6 because this Psalm is quoted in I Pet. 2:7 and 9. This same truth is expressed in Rom. 8:31-34.

Believers must be continually reminded that this world is not their home and the physical is not ultimate reality! We are pilgrims here, just passing through. We must not be afraid (i.e., v. 14).

It is ironic that those protected by the Lord are often the ones who are being persecuted. Knowing, loving, and serving God does not insulate one from pain, unfair treatment, even death. It may look like evil has won, but wait, even amidst suffering, the believer is blessed (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41).

▣ **“if you prove zealous for what is good?”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action. They were suffering expressly because they were Christians (cf. v. 14; 2:19; 3:16; 4:16). However, notice the contingency (i.e., SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD), “zealous for what is good”!

**3:14 “But even if you should suffer”** This is a rare FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE (farthest condition from reality), which means possible, but not certain action (cf. II Tim. 3:12). Not every believer everywhere was suffering. Suffering was never and is never the experience of every Christian, but every Christian must be ready (cf. 4:12-16; John 15:20; Acts 14:22; Rev. 8:17)!

▣ **“righteousness”** In this context it must refer to godly living or our verbal witness about the gospel. See Special Topic following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable

to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
  - a. Romans 3:26
  - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
  - c. II Timothy 4:8
  - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
  - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
  - b. Matthew 27:19
  - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
  - a. Leviticus 19:2
  - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
  - a. Romans 3:21-31
  - b. Romans 4
  - c. Romans 5:6-11
  - d. Galatians 3:6-14
  - e. Given by God
    - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
    - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
  - f. Received by faith
    - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
  - g. Through acts of the Son
    - 1) Romans 5:21
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
    - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
  - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
  - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
  - c. I Timothy 6:11
  - d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
  - e. I John 3:7
  - f. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
  - a. Acts 17:31
  - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia*!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

▣ **“you are blessed”** This is a different term from v. 9. This is the term used in the Beatitudes of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:10-12). Believers are linked with the OT prophets as God’s light and revelation to a lost world. By our witness even amidst persecution, the unbeliever may turn and praise God (cf. 3:1,8-9).

▣ **“AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION”** This is an allusion to Isa. 8:12-13 (see similar concept in Isa. 50:9; 54:17; Rom. 8:31-38). Literally it is “fear not their fear.” This phrase could be understood in two ways: (1) the fear of God that the persecutors felt or (2) the fear they instill in others. Lack of fear is a characteristic of the child of God (cf. v. 6).

**3:15 “but sanctify”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which implies a decisive past act of setting someone apart for God’s use (this may also reflect Isa. 8:14, which has “sanctuary”). Believers must sanctify Christ in their hearts as Christ sanctified Himself for them (cf. John 17:19).

Notice that in I Thess. 5:23 it is God who sanctifies believers. Now believers are commanded to sanctify themselves. This is the covenant paradox of biblical faith (compare Ezek. 18:31 with 36:26-27). God is sovereign, yet humans are also free and must exercise that freedom in God’s will. And how are we to sanctify Christ?

1. with our love for one another (cf. vv. 8-9)
2. with our lives (cf. vv. 13-14)
3. with our verbal witness (cf. v. 15)

▣ **“Christ as Lord”** The King James Version has “Lord God,” which reflects Isa. 8:12-13, which has “the LORD of hosts,” while v. 14 is a Messianic text. However, the ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>72</sup>,  $\aleph$ , A, B, and C have “Christ as Lord,” which fits this context better.

▣ **“in your hearts”** “Hearts” is an OT idiom referring to the whole person. See Special Topic: The Heart at Mark 2:6.

▣ **“always being ready to make a defense”** This is the Greek term *apologia*, which is a compound of *apo* (from) and *logos* (word). It refers to a legal defense in a courtroom setting (cf. Acts 19:33; 22:1; 25:16; 26:1,2,24). This text is often used to encourage believers to be an evangelistic witness, which is surely needed, but in context this probably refers to official trials or interrogations. Notice that it is important for all believers to have a prepared, logical presentation of their faith in Christ, whether for a court or for a neighbor. Every believer should be ready to be a verbal witness!

▣ **“for the hope that is in you”** Hope here is a collective word for the gospel and its future consummation. Believers live now in godly ways because of their confidence in Christ’s promises and return.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

Paul used this term often in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer's faith (e.g., I Tim. 1:1). This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. It was often associated with "faith" and "love" (cf. I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 2:16). A partial list of some of Paul's uses are:

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, I Tim. 1:1
3. The believer to be presented to God, Col. 1:22-23; I Thess. 2:19
4. Hope is laid up in heaven, Col. 1:5
5. Trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23; I Thess. 2:19
6. Ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:13; 5:8
7. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2, II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
8. The salvation of the Gentiles by Christ, Col. 1:27
9. Assurance of salvation, I Thess. 5:8
10. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
11. Results of Christian maturity, Rom. 5:2-5
12. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20-22
13. Adoption's consummation, Rom. 8:23-25
14. Title for God, Rom. 15:13
15. Paul's desire for believers, II Cor. 1:7
16. OT as a guide to NT believers, Rom. 15:4

▣ **"with gentleness and reverence"** The first term is used of wives in 3:4, where it describes an attitude which is pleasing to God. This is true, not only in the interpersonal relationships of the home, but also of the believer's relationship to others, even those who instigate persecution (cf. II Tim. 2:25).

The second term is used often in I Peter and also reflects a day of persecution and intimidation (cf. 1:17; 2:17,18; 3:2,15). We are to respect God and because of that, honor even unbelieving masters, husbands, and persecutors, as we witness to His power and kingdom.

**3:16** There is some confusion as to where v. 16 starts. NASB and NKJV start here and UBS<sup>4</sup>, NRSV, TEV, and NJB start it a phrase earlier.

▣ **"keep a good conscience"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE.

There is not an OT counterpart to the Greek term "conscience" unless the Hebrew term "breast" implies a knowledge of self and its motives. Originally the Greek term referred to consciousness related to the five senses. It came to be used of the inner senses (cf. Rom. 2:15). Paul uses this term twice in his trials in Acts (cf. 23:1 and 24:16). It refers to his sense that he had not knowingly violated any expected duties toward God (cf. I Cor. 4:4).

Conscience is a developing understanding of believers' motives and actions based on

1. a biblical worldview
2. an indwelling Spirit
3. a knowledge of the word of God
4. the personal reception of the gospel

Peter has used this expression three times, 2:19; 3:16 and 21. This is exactly what religious legalism could not provide, but the gospel can.

▣ **"so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame"**  
See notes at 2:12 and 2:15.

**3:17 "if God should will it so"** This is a rare FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL as in v. 14. Peter has consistently expressed the contingency, but not certainty, of suffering and persecution (cf. 1:6; 2:15; 3:17; 4:14).

**3:18-22** Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis In the Apostolic Period*, pp. 69, 172, asserts that these verses are from a baptismal hymn. Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, thinks just v. 18 is poetic (none of the translations used in this commentary print it as a poem). If it is hymnic or poetic, then it should not be "pushed" for doctrine!

**3:18 “for Christ also died for sins”** This phrase is used in the Septuagint for “a sin offering” (cf. Lev. 5:7, 6:30; Isaiah 53; II Cor. 5:21). This phrase speaks of the vicarious, substitutionary death of Jesus, as does 2:22-24.

There are two parts of this phrase which have Greek variants.

1. “Christ died” (cf. NASB, TEV, NJB). This is found in the Greek manuscripts P<sup>72</sup>,  $\aleph$ , A, B, and C. Other ancient Greek uncials have “suffered” (NKJV, NRSV, i.e., MSS B, K and P). “Suffered” fits both the context and Peter’s vocabulary (he uses “suffered” eleven times) best, but if it were original why would any scribe have changed it to “died”?
2. “For sins.” There are over seven variants of this section of the verse. Most of them incorporate “for us” or “on behalf of us.” The problem is that the Greek preposition *peri* is used in connection with sin instead of the more expected *huper*.

▣ **“once for all”** This is the theme of the book of Hebrews (cf. Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:17; 9:12,18,26,28; 10:10). Christ is the perfect, effective, once-given sacrifice for sin!

▣ **“the just for the unjust”** This may be an allusion to Isa. 53:11-12 and could be translated “the righteous for the unrighteous” (cf. NRSV). “The righteous one” may have been a title for Jesus in the early church (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52; I John 2:1,29; 3:7). It emphasizes His sinless life (cf. 1:19; 2:22) given on behalf of the sinful (cf. 2:24).

▣ **“in order that”** This is a purpose (*hina*) clause.

▣ **“He might bring us to God”** This refers to “access” or “introduction” to deity (cf. Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12). Jesus’ death restores the relationship with God lost in the Fall. The image of God in mankind is restored through Christ. Believers have the possibility of intimacy with God as Adam and Eve experienced in Eden before the Fall of Genesis 3.

▣ **“having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”** There is a contrast (parallelism) between Jesus’ physical body (cf. 4:1) and His spiritual life (cf. 4:6; I Cor. 15:45). This same truth may be reflected in the early creed or hymn recorded in I Tim. 3:16.

Both of these phrases are AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLES, which implies a historical event (crucifixion and resurrection, cf. Rom. 1:3-4) performed by an outside agency (i.e., the Father or the Holy Spirit). It is difficult in this passage to determine whether “spirit” should be capitalized (i.e., Holy Spirit) or not (i.e., Jesus’ human spirit). I prefer the latter (as does A. T. Robertson), but F. F. Bruce prefers the former.

▣ **“made proclamation to”** This is the Greek term *kērussō*, which means to proclaim or publicly announce. In the related passage, 4:6, the VERB is *euangelizō*, which refers exclusively to preaching the gospel. It is uncertain whether a distinction should be drawn in this context between these two terms (cf. Mark 5:20; Luke 9:60, where *kērussō* is used of gospel proclamation). I think they are synonyms.

▣ **“the spirits”** There are two theories concerning this: (1) dead men (4:6; Heb. 12:23) or (2) evil angels (Gen. 6; II Pet. 2:4-5; Jude 6; I Enoch). Humans are not referred to in the NT as “spirits” without other qualifiers (cf. F. F. Bruce, *answers to Questions*, p. 128).

▣ **“now in prison”** There are several items in the text which must be linked together in some way to determine to what Peter is referring:

1. Jesus was “in the spirit” (v. 18)
2. Jesus preached to spirits who were imprisoned (v. 19)
3. these spirits were disobedient in the days of Noah (v. 20)

When all of these are compared, a message to the fallen angels of Gen. 6 or the humans of Noah’s day who drowned seem the only textual options. Noah’s day is also mentioned in II Pet. 2:4-5, along with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. II Pet. 2:6). In Jude rebellious angels (cf. Jude 6) and Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Jude 7) are also linked together.

It is unclear from the larger context why Peter even mentions this subject unless he is using the flood as an analogy to baptism (i.e., being saved through water, cf. v. 20).

Two of the major points of contention in interpreting this passage are (1) when and (2) the content of Christ’s preaching?

1. the preexistent Christ preached through Noah (cf. 1:11 where the Spirit of Christ preaches through the OT writers) to the people of his day, now imprisoned (Augustine)
2. Christ, between death and resurrection, preached to the imprisoned people of Noah’s day
  - a. condemnation to them
  - b. salvation to them (Clement of Alexandria)
  - c. good things to Noah and his family (in Paradise) in front of them (in *Tartarus*)

3. Christ, between death and resurrection, preached to
  - a. the angels who took human women and had children by them (cf. Gen. 6:1-2)
  - b. the half-angel, half-human offspring of Gen. 6:4 (see Special Topic at Genesis 6 online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)). The content of the message was their judgment and His victory. I Enoch says these disembodied half-angel/half-humans are the demons of the NT.
4. Christ as the victorious Messiah ascended through the heavens (i.e., angelic levels of the Gnostics or the seven heavens of the rabbis, cf. 3:22; Eph. 4:9). II Enoch 7:1-5 says that the fallen angels are imprisoned in the second heaven. He, by this very act, announced His victory over the angelic realms (i.e., all spiritual opposition, cf. the *Jerome Bible Commentary*, p. 367). I like this option best in this context.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

- I. Old Testament
  - A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
  - B. *Sheol* characterized
    1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
    2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
    3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
    4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
    5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
    6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
    7. people there called *Repha'im*, Isa. 14:9-11)
- II. New Testament
  - A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
  - B. *Hades* characterized
    1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
    2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
    3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
    4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
  - C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
    1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
    2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
  - D. *Gehenna*
    1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
    2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
    3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
    4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
      - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
      - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
      - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
      - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
      - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
      - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5

- g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).

- h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41

E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that

1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

### III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.

1. human souls exist before their physical life
2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state

B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection

1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

### IV. Heaven

A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.

1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
3. the place of God’s throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)

B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

### V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death’s Door*

**3:20 “when the patience of God kept waiting”** This is a compound of *mēkos* (distant, remote) and *thumos* (anger). This is an IMPERFECT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE, implying God Himself continued to wait again and again. God’s long-suffering, slow to avenge, loving patience characterizes His dealings with rebellious humans (cf. 3:20; Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:16-23; Ps. 103:8-14; Joel 2:13; Micah 6:18-20; II Pet. 3:15; Rom. 2:4; 9:22). This godly character is also to be manifest in His children (cf. II Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; I Tim. 1:16; II Tim. 3:10; 4:2).



In Peter's writings God is depicted as patiently waiting and withholding His judgment so that people may be saved.

1. He waited in the days of Noah, I Pet. 3:20
2. He delayed the Second Coming, II Pet. 3:9

God wants all people to be saved (cf. II Pet. 3:9,15)!

▣ **“who once were disobedient. . .Noah”** This seems to refer to the angels of Genesis 6 (cf. II Pet. 2:4-5; Jude v. 6) or the unbelieving humans of Noah's day.

▣ **“were brought safely through *the* water”** Contextually it seems that Peter brings up the historical account of Noah and the flood as a way to talk about being “saved” (OT physical delivery versus NT spiritual salvation) through water (i.e., OT flood of Genesis 6-9 versus Christian baptism). If I Enoch is the background, then Noah and his family (i.e., all mankind) were saved by the flood waters from the evil, mixed race of humans and angels.

3:21

NASB	“corresponding to that”
NKJV	“there is also an antitype”
NRSV	“which this prefigured”
TEV	“which was a symbol pointing to”
NJB	“corresponding to this”

This is the Greek term *antitupon*, which is a compound of *anti* (i.e., as over against or corresponding to) and *tupeos* (an image or copy). This is the only example of the ADJECTIVE in the NT, but the NOUN is in Heb. 9:24. This phrase shows the symbolic, typological nature of Peter's reference.

▣ **“baptism”** Baptism was the early church's opportunity for a person's public profession (or confession). It was/is not the mechanism for salvation, but the occasion of a verbal affirmation of faith. Remember the early church had no buildings and met in homes or often in secret places because of persecution.

Many commentators have asserted that I Peter is a baptismal sermon. Although this is possible, it is not the only option. It is true that Peter often uses baptism as a crucial act of faith (cf. Acts 2:38,41; 10:47). However, it was/is not a sacramental event, but a faith event, symbolizing death, burial, and resurrection as the believer identifies with Christ's own experience (cf. Rom. 6:7-9; Col. 2:12). The act is symbolic, not sacramental; the act is the occasion of profession, not the mechanism of salvation.

▣ **“saves you”** This term is used mostly in the OT for physical deliverance, but is used mostly in the NT for spiritual deliverance. In this context of persecution it obviously has both connotations.

▣ **“but an appeal to God for a good conscience”** This shows that it is not the ritual of baptism that saves, but a believer's attitude toward God (cf. v. 16). However, I would add that baptism is not an option but (1) an example given by Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34 and (2) a command from Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:19) for all believers. The NT knows nothing of unbaptized believers. In the NT baptism was inseparably related to one's profession of faith.

See note on “conscience” at 3:16.

▣ **“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** This shows that the essence of salvation is in Jesus' resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4-5), not our baptism. This line of thought is clearly seen in Rom. 6:3-4. Baptism by analogy, by immersion, symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection. In reality the mode is not as significant as the heart of the candidate.

3:22 **“who is at the right hand”** This is an anthropomorphic metaphor of authority, power, and prestige (cf. I John 2:1). This imagery is drawn from Ps. 110:1.

The Bible uses human language to describe supernatural persons, places, and events. It is obviously analogous, symbolic, and metaphorical. It is able to communicate reality, but within limits (limits of (1) our fallen human perception and (2) its physical, time-bound, cultural particularity). It is adequate, but not ultimate.

▣ **“angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him”** This seems to refer to angelic ranks (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:20-21, 6:12; Col. 2:15; I Enoch). It shows Christ's complete authority and power over the spiritual realm.

Although I Peter is not directly addressing Gnosticism, it is clear from other NT writings (Col., Eph., I Tim., Titus, and I John) that the cultural context of the first century Greco-Roman world was impacted by this philosophical/theological thinking. In second century gnosticism (and the Nag Hammadi texts) the Greek term *pleroma* (fullness), used often by Paul, refers to the “fullness of God,” the angelic levels (*aeons* i.e., possibly the Jewish seven heavens) between a high good god and lesser gods. Jesus is the key to heaven, not secret passwords or knowledge related to these intermediary angelic/demonic beings.

Even if the Gnostic aeons are not the focus of the passage it seems that angels are! This would imply that the “spirits in prison” refers to the disobedient angels who took human women and produced offspring (cf. Gen. 6:1-4).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM

- A. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the gnostic writings of the second century. However, its ideas were present in the first century (Dead Sea Scrolls) and the Apostle John’s writings.
- B. The problem at Ephesus (I Timothy), Crete (Titus) and Colossae (Colossians) was a hybrid of incipient gnosticism and legalistic Judaism.
- C. Some tenets of Valentinian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century.
  - 1. Matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter.
  - 2. There are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the Old Testament, who formed the universe (*kosmos*).
  - 3. Jesus was an emanation, like YHWH, but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest, but still less than God and certainly not incarnate deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be divine. He appeared to be human, but was really only a spirit (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6).
  - 4. Salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.
- D. The gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems.
  - 1. For some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*).
  - 2. For others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. In this book, the false teachers emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true salvation (cf. 2:16-23).
- E. A good reference book is *The Nag Hammadi Library* by James M. Robinson and Richard Smith

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Were the writers of the NT male chauvinists?
- 2. How should women dress? (Send for my tape #1337 entitled “A Theology of Christian Dress”)
- 6. How can our family relationships affect our prayers?
- 7. List the characteristics that should guide our social relationships.
- 8. Why do Christians suffer?
- 9. Should every Christian be a verbal witness?
- 10. Who are the spirits in prison?
- 11. Does baptism save us? (Send for my tape #1962 entitled “Baptismal Regeneration”)

# I PETER 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Good Stewards of God's Grace	Christ's Suffering and Ours  (3:18-4:6)	The Obligations of Christians  (2:11-4:11)	Changed Lives	The Break with Sin
4:1-6		4:1-6	4:1-6	4:1-6
	Serving for God's Glory		Good Managers of God's Gifts	The Revelation of Christ is Close
4:7-11	4:7-11	4:7-11	4:7-11	4:7-11
Suffering as a Christian	Suffering for God's Glory	Recapitulation	Suffering as a Christian	Suffering for Christ
4:12-19	4:12-19	4:12-19	4:12-19	4:12-19

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v from the introductory article on Good Bible Reading) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup>For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. <sup>4</sup>*In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;* <sup>5</sup>but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup>For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*.

**4:1 "Therefore"** This links the previous discussion to what follows.

▣ **"Christ has suffered in the flesh"** This relates to 3:18. Flesh refers to Jesus' physical life. He was really one of us (i.e., human). He died in our place (cf. v. 18; Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). I Peter emphasizes Christ's suffering (cf. 2:21,23; 3:18; 4:1) and the reality of His followers' suffering because they are following Him (cf. 2:19-20; 3:14,17; 4:15,19; 5:10).

The substitutionary nature of Christ's suffering mentioned in 3:18 and 2:21 is accentuated by several Greek manuscripts adding "suffered for you" (i.e., **Ν**) or "for us" (i.e., **Ν**<sup>c</sup>, A, K, and P).

The same type of PRONOUN specifying addition can also be seen in v. 3. Early church scribes tried to clarify their texts.

▣ **“arm yourselves also”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. “Arm” is a military term for putting on heavy armor and preparing for battle. There is a spiritual conflict in our daily lives (cf. Eph. 6:10-20; Rom. 13:12; I Thess. 5:8).

▣ **“with the same purpose”** Jesus’ attitude toward suffering, including innocent suffering, is that it is normative for the godly in a spiritually fallen world (cf. John 15:20; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 4:12-19).

▣ **“because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin”** This phrase can be interpreted in several ways depending on the grammatical form. Christ is our example in suffering innocently, even vicariously (AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). Believers are now involved in suffering because of their identification with Him.

The main VERB can be either MIDDLE (A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, p. 121) or PASSIVE (Moulton’s *Analytical Greek Lexicon* and Barbara and Tim Friberg’s *Analytical Greek New Testament*). If it is MIDDLE it is encouraging believers to be actively involved in not sinning as followers of Christ’s example. If PASSIVE it is emphasizing the spiritual fact of the believer’s deliverance from the power of sin.

Death annuls one’s relationship to sin. This may be connected to the theological concepts of Rom. 6. Death to the old life brings potential service to God (cf. Rom. 6:2,6,7) or baptism symbolizes one’s newness of life (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

The whole point is that as believers follow Christ’s example of suffering, so too, His example of victory over sin. We are new creatures in Christ! We must live like it. Christlikeness is the will of God (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; I Pet. 1:15). It reflects the fact that the image of God lost in the Fall (cf. Genesis 3) is fully restored in Christ. Christians have a choice again on how they will live. They are no longer slaves of sin! Walk in Him!

**4:2 “so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men”** This reflects the same theological truth as Romans 6. Believers have died to sin and are now alive to God’s service (cf. Rom. 6:20). Salvation is a new life, a new creation. It has observable characteristics.

▣ **“but for the will of God”** See Special Topic: The Will of God at I Peter 2:15.

**4:3** This verse is a condemnation of the readers’ previous lives in paganism. This is one of the verses that causes commentators to assert that the churches to which Peter is writing are mostly Gentile congregations. Pagan society was very immoral, even in its worship practices. Christianity should make a noticeably different and dramatic change in lifestyle habits. This change is often the beginning of the persecution by other pagans. Sin loves company.

After the opening “for,” some Greek texts add “you” and others “us.” These are both scribal additions trying to clarify the author’s phrasing.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT

Lists of both vices and virtues are common in the NT. Often they reflect both rabbinical and cultural (Hellenistic) lists. The NT lists of contrasting characteristics can be seen in:

	<u>Vices</u>	<u>Virtues</u>
1. Paul	Rom. 1:28-32	---
	Rom. 13:13	Rom. 12:9-21
	I Cor. 5:9-11	---
	I Cor. 6:10	I Cor. 6:6-9
	II Cor. 12:20	II Cor. 6:4-10
	Gal. 5:19-21	Gal. 5:22-23
	Eph. 4:25-32	---
	Eph. 5:3-5	---
	---	Phil. 4:8-9
	Col. 3:5,8	Col. 3:12-14
	I Tim. 1:9-10	---
	I Tim. 6:4-5	---
	II Tim. 2:22a,23	II Tim. 2:22b,24
	Titus 1:7, 3:3	Titus 1:8-9; 3:1-2

2. James	James 3:15-16	James 3:17-18
3. Peter	I Pet. 4:3 II Pet. 1:9	I Pet. 4:7-11 II Pet. 1:5-8
4. John	Rev. 21:8; 22:15	---

▣ **“having pursued a course of”** This is a PERFECT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. Unbelievers have purposefully and permanently set their course on self and sin.



NASB “sensuality”  
NKJV, NRSV “licentiousness”  
TEV “indecenty”  
NJB “behaving in a debauched way”

This term implies a total lack of self control, a determined violation of social norms, especially in the sexual area (cf. Mark 7:22; Rom. 13:13; II Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; I Pet. 4:3; II Pet. 2:7,18; Jude 6).

▣ **“lusts”** This term means to strongly desire something or someone. The intense craving can be positive (cf. Luke 22:15; I Tim. 2:1; I Pet. 1:12), but usually it is negative (cf. I Pet. 1:14; 2:11; 4:2,3; II Pet. 1:4; 2:10,18; 3:3; Mark 4:19).

▣ **“drunkenness”** This is a compound term, found only here in the NT of “wine” (*oinos*) and “bubble over” (*phluō*). The ancient world drank wine regularly, as did Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:18-19) and the early church. It is the excess that is condemned (cf. Pro. 23:29-35; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM

### I. Biblical Terms

#### A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine,” BDB 779, e.g. Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

#### B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Eos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

### II. Biblical Usage

#### A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Samson – Jdgs. 16:19; Nabal – I Sam. 25:36; Uriah – II Sam. 11:13; Amnon – II Sam. 13:28; Elah – I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).

6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

#### B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, "Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed." (BB 58b).

#### C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on "new wine" at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Mathew. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

### III. Theological Insight

#### A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

#### B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

#### C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

### IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

### V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?



NASB “carousing”  
 NKJV “revelries”  
 NRSV “revels”  
 TEV “orgies”

This term *kōmos* is related to the Greek term for village, *kōmē*. It implies a large community-wide festive party involving excess of eating, drinking, and unrestrained sexual activity (cf. Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21).

▣ **“drinking parties”** This term is related to the previous term. The NJB combines them into “having wild parties and drunken orgies.”



NASB, NKJV “abominable idolatries”  
 NRSV “lawless idolatry”  
 TEV “the disgusting worship of idols”  
 NJB “sacrilegiously worshipping false gods”

This list of sins relates to pagan worship practices that often involved excess of drinking, eating, and sexual immorality of the most base kind. It was similar to the Canaanite fertility worship so condemned in the OT.

**4:4** This verse relates to 2:12,15; 3:16. Christians were misunderstood and attacked because (1) their lives and priorities changed so obviously and radically that family, friends, and neighbors noticed and (2) some of the Christian terms and practices were misinterpreted (i.e., love feasts as incest, Lord’s Supper as cannibalism, etc.).

**4:5 “they will give account to Him who is ready to judge”** Judgment is certain (cf. Matt. 12:36; Heb. 9:27; 10:27; II Pet. 2:4,9; 3:7). The one who judges is

1. God (cf. Rom. 2:2-3; 14:10,12; I Pet. 1:17; 2:23; Rev. 20:11-15)
2. Christ (cf. John 9:39; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; 17:31; II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1)
3. the Father through the Son (cf. John 5:22-27; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16)

Judgment is an unpleasant subject, but a recurrent theme in the Bible. It is based on several bedrock biblical truths.

1. This is a moral universe created by an ethical God (we reap what we sow, cf. Gal. 6:7).
2. Humanity is fallen; we have rebelled.
3. This is not the world God intended it to be.
4. All conscious creations (angels and humans) will give an accounting to their Creator for the gift of life. We are stewards.
5. Eternity will be permanently determined by our actions and choices made in this life.

▣ **“living and the dead”** This means all humans, both those who are alive and those who have already died (cf. Phil. 2:10; Rev. 2:13).

**4:6 “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead”** There are several theories concerning this phrase:

1. it relates to 3:18-20 (i.e., “the spirits in prison”)
2. it refers to all humans because all humans, believers and unbelievers, die physically because of sin (parallel to v. 5)
3. it refers to those who responded to the gospel but have since died (both AORIST PASSIVES)
4. it refers to the spiritually dead (i.e., the lost) according to Augustine, Bede, Erasmus, and Luther (cf. Luke 15:24,32; Eph. 2:1,5; 5:14; Col. 2:13)

This last theory speculates that some (i.e., those who never heard the gospel) will receive a chance to accept Christ after death. This theory is attractive to human reason, but totally foreign to the rest of Scripture (i.e., Heb. 9:27). It negates the urgency and necessity of evangelism and missions now! I think option 1 or 3 best fits the context.

▣ **“they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit”** This phrasing is very similar to the description of Jesus in 3:18. It confirms the reality of an afterlife. The Bible is explicit about a resurrection of both the saved and lost (cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:7-11

<sup>7</sup>The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. <sup>8</sup>Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup>Be hospitable to one another without complaint. <sup>10</sup>As each one has received a *special gift*, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold

grace of God. <sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**4:7 “the end of all things is near”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. The Second Coming is a recurrent theme in I Peter (cf. 1:5,6; 4:13,17; 5:1,10). The physical earth is going to be destroyed/cleansed by a purifying fire (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The view of imminency of the Parousia is also seen in Jesus (cf. Mark 1:15; Luke 21:32); Paul (cf. Rom. 13:11); James (cf. James 5:8); and John (cf. Rev. 1:1,3; 3:11; 22:6,7,10,12,20).

The imminence of Jesus’ return has been the subject of many sermons for two thousand years and still He has not returned. Does this imply (1) that He is not coming or (2) that the NT is wrong about His coming soon? Jesus did not know the time of His return (cf. Matt. 24:36). This surprises us and is part of the mystery of the incarnation.

An immediate return seems to be the perspective of the authors of the NT. What has happened? First, let us remember that time is only significant to those involved in it. God is not slow, but also God is above time. The nearness of Jesus’ return has been an encouragement and motivator of godly living for every generation of believers. Yet, theologically II Thessalonians depicts a delayed return (i.e., not until the “man of lawlessness is revealed”). The Second Coming is a recurrent theme, but a reality for only one generation of believers (cf. II Pet. 3).



NASB	“be of sound judgment and sober <i>spirit</i> ”
NKJV	“be serious and watchful”
NRSV	“be serious and disciple yourselves”
TEV	“you must be self-controlled and alert”
NJB	“so keep your minds calm and sober”

This is the beginning of a series of IMPERATIVES or PARTICIPLES used as IMPERATIVES, which emphasize godly living (cf. 4:6c). These two terms refer to mental alertness, especially in the area of prayer. The first term is *sōphroneō*. It (and its related forms) refers to calm, sound, stable, and vigorous thinking (it is used often in the Pastoral Letters of Paul, cf. I Tim. 2:9,15; 3:2; II Tim. 1:7; Titus 1:8; 2:2,4,5,6,12). The second term is *nēphō* (and its related forms), which is literally related to drunkenness, but is used figuratively of rational, controlled, sound thinking, possibly self-controlled (cf. I Thess. 5:6,8; I Tim. 3:11; Titus 2:2; and I Pet. 1:13; 5:8).

However, notice that Peter mentions no end-time events connected to Christ’s return. He uses the reality of it as an impetus to godly living. These are both AORIST IMPERATIVES. This is possibly related to Peter’s Gethsemane experience (cf. Matt. 26:40-41). The immediate prospect of the Parousia is a real encouragement to Christlike living in every age, especially amidst severe persecution.

▣ **“for the purpose of prayer”** Prayer is a powerful weapon in times of persecution and temptation (cf. Eph. 6:18-19), not only for oneself, but for others (cf. I Thess. 5:17,25; James 5:16). As v. 3 describes the inappropriate behavior of the unbelieving pagans, vv. 7-11 describe the behavior expected of believers.

**4:8**

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB	“above all”
NKJV	“above all things”
TEV	“above everything”

This is a Greek idiom for priority (cf. James 5:12). Love is priority (cf. 1:22; 3:8; John 13:34; 15:12,17; I Cor. 13; I John 2:7-8; 3:11,23; 4:7-21).

▣ **“keep fervent in your love”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. This mandated an ongoing love for other believers, which is a theme I Peter has introduced before (cf. 1:22; 3:8).

▣ **“for one another”** Notice the threefold use of “one another” (cf. vv. 8,9, and 10). Christianity is communal. We are given one to another (cf. I Cor. 12:7).

▣ **“love covers a multitude of sins”** There are several theories concerning this phrase.

1. it is an OT quote from Pro. 10:12 (from the MT not the LXX) where love does not remember wrongs done to it
2. it is related to James 5:20 where love helps another believer reverse the spiritual consequences of back sliding



3. it is related to Matt. 6:14-15 and Mark 11:25 where our forgiveness of others is an evidence of our being forgiven (i.e., Origen and Tertullian)
4. it is related to I Cor. 13:7, the ability of love not to see the obvious weaknesses of fellow Christians under persecution

**4:9 “Be hospitable to one another”** This is a compound term of *phileō* (love) plus *xenos* (stranger). This stranger-loving was especially needed for itinerant Christians in a day where Inns were notorious places of evil (cf. Matt. 25:35ff; Rom. 12:13; I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; II John 5-8). There is no VERB in this phrase in the Greek text. Because of the number of IMPERATIVES, this is probably also an ongoing command.

▣ **“without complaint”** Believers’ attitudes are crucial. Believers realize they are owners of nothing and stewards of everything. This open door policy was not only needed for traveling church workers, but also for local believers who had lost their jobs and homes because of persecution. This command, like the others, shows the corporate nature of the Christian faith.

**4:10 “As each one has received a special gift”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies a completed act in past time. The term gift (*charisma*) is from the root for “grace” (*charis*). These gifts are undeserved, unmerited love gifts for ministry. Every believer has a spiritual gift, given by God at salvation, for the purpose of ministry to and for the Church (cf. Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:7,11,18; Eph. 4:7). These gifts may be natural talents, but if so, they are supernaturally energized for the glory of Christ!

The practical aspect of this NT truth is that every believer is a full-time, called, gifted minister of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12). Every believer is therefore crucial to the effective working of the local church. This is the biblical correction to the clergy/laity model so common in the modern church, but so dysfunctional. The world will never be won and disciplined by paid or ordained staff only!

▣ **“in serving one another”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. It is from the Greek term for servant (*diakonos*). This later becomes the title for deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1). In Christianity leaders are servants, not bosses. Spiritual gifts are for others, not ourselves (cf. I Cor. 12:7). Spiritual gifts are not “merit badges” but “service towels.”

▣ **“as good stewards”** This is literally “household managers.” The church is the household of God (cf. v. 17). Believers will give an account to God in Christ for their stewardship of spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 3:10-17; II Cor. 5:10).

▣ **“the manifold grace of God”** The word “manifold” appears twice in I Peter, meaning “variegated,” like light going through a prism. This passage balances I Pet. 1:6. For every trial (cf. James 1:2) there is a commensurate grace of God and God has chosen to make it available through other believers. No believer is an island.

**4:11 “whoever . . . whoever”** These are two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES. God’s gifted servants are expected to speak and serve through His power. If we speak it is His utterances. If we serve it is by His strength.

▣ **“which God supplies”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE of a word used of one who financially supported a “chorus” (*chorēgēs*, which is a compound of *choros* and *hēgeomai*). God continues to richly supply His gifted ones (cf. II Cor. 9:10, the same word with *epi* prefixed, occurs in II Pet. 1:5,11).

It is interesting that Paul seems to attribute spiritual gifts to the Spirit (cf. Rom. 12) or to Christ (cf. Eph. 4:11), but Peter attributes them to God the Father. This is another example of all the persons of the Godhead being involved in kingdom activities (cf. I Cor. 12:4-6).

▣ **“so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”** This is a purpose (*hina*) clause. Spiritual gifts should glorify God, not the human agent. Our giftedness points to Him (cf. Matt. 5:16; I Cor. 10:31; I Pet. 2:12).

▣ **“to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever”** This refers to Jesus in this context (cf. II Tim. 4:18; II Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:6). In Rev. 5:13 it is used of both the Father and the Son. Usually this phrase refers to the Father (cf. I Pet. 5:11; Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil 4:20; I Tim. 1:17; I Pet. 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 7:12). For note on “glory” see 1:21.

▣ Doxologies are common in the NT. The NT authors often break out in praise to God (cf. Rom. 11:33-36; Eph. 3:20-21; I Pet. 5:11).

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic: Amen at Mark 3:28.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:12-19**

<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup>but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that

also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. <sup>14</sup>If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup>Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup>but if *anyone* suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. <sup>17</sup>For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? <sup>19</sup>Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

**4:12 “Beloved”** This was the Father’s way of referring to His Son (at Jesus’ baptism, cf. Matt. 3:17; quote from Isa. 42:1,12:18; at Jesus’ transfiguration, 17:5). This title is later transferred to His followers (cf. 2:11; 4:12; II Pet. 1:17; 3:1,8,15,15,17; and used repeatedly in Paul’s writings).

▣ **“do not be surprised”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually refers to stopping an act already in progress. These believers were surprised at the persecution.

▣ **“at the fiery ordeal”** This is a metaphor for trials and persecutions (not common problems of daily life, cf. vv. 14,18; but how we handle our cultural life is a witness). There are so many biblical texts that assert that persecution and suffering are normal for those who follow Christ (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; II Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-16). They are the Father’s means of producing Christlikeness (cf. Heb. 5:8).

▣ **“which comes upon you”** This is not a FUTURE TENSE, but a PRESENT PARTICIPLE. It was a present unexpected reality!

▣ **“for your testing”** This is the Greek VERB *periazō*, see Special Topic at Mark 1:13, #2, c.

▣ **“as though some strange things were happening to you”** This phrase has a compound VERB (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) with the PREPOSITION *sun*, which means “participation with.” These believers were going through persecutions. They needed to know

1. it was not unusual for believers
2. it was not a result of sin (i.e., Deut. 27-28)
3. it had a purpose in God’s will

### SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

1. Because of personal sin (temporal judgment). This does not imply that all problems and negative circumstances are a result of sin (cf. Job; Ps. 73; Luke 14:1-5; Neh. 9; Acts 5:1-11; I Cor. 11:29-30; Gal. 6:7).
2. To develop Christlikeness (Heb. 5:8). Even Jesus, humanly speaking, had to be matured, so too, His followers (cf. Rom. 5:3-4, 8:28-29; II Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 12:5-12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 1:7).
3. To develop a powerful, effective witness (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-22; I Pet. 2:18-21, 3:13-17).
4. As a sign of the birth pains of the New Age (cf. Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:8).

**4:13 “share”** See Special Topic below.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOINŌNIA*

The term “fellowship” (*koinōnia*) means

1. close association with a person
  - a. with the Son (cf. I John 1:6; I Cor. 1:9)
  - b. with the Spirit (cf. II Cor. 13:13; Phil. 2:1)
  - c. with the Father and the Son (cf. I John 1:3)
  - d. with other covenant brothers/sisters (cf. I John 1:7; Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; Philemon 17)

2. close association with things or groups
  - a. with the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:5; Philemon 6)
  - b. with the blood of Christ (cf. I Cor. 10:16)
  - c. not with darkness (cf. II Cor. 6:14)
  - d. with suffering (cf. Phil. 3:10; 4:14; I Pet. 4:13)
3. gift or contribution done in generous fashion (cf. Rom. 12:13; 15:26; II Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Phil. 4:15; Heb. 13:16)
4. God's gift of grace through Christ, which restores mankind's fellowship with Him and his brothers and sisters

This asserts the horizontal relationship (human to human) that is brought about by the vertical relationship (human to Creator). It also emphasizes the need for and joy of Christian community. The verb tense stresses the start and continuance of this experience of community (cf. 1:3 [twice], 6,7). Christianity is corporate!

▣ **“keep on rejoicing”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is amazing that suffering for Christ is linked to joy. This shows the radically new world view that believers receive by faith when they put their ultimate trust in Christ. Jesus Himself first stated this truth in Matt. 5:10-12. Paul states the same truth in Rom. 5:2,3.

▣ **“so that also at the revelation of His glory”** This refers to the glorious return of Christ to receive His own (cf. John 14:1-3).

**4:14 “if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL, which is assumed to be true and fulfilled according to the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **“reviled”** The term “reviled” or “insulted” is also from Matt. 5:11. Peter must have remembered hearing Jesus speak on this very subject.

▣ **“the name of Christ”** “In the name of. . .” is an OT idiom referring to the person. Calling upon the name of the Lord (i.e., Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21, cf. Rom. 10:9-13) means trusting in Jesus as Savior. Praying in the name of the Lord (cf. John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-24) means praying in His person and character.

▣ **“you are blessed”** This is the Greek term *makarios*, used by Jesus in the Beatitudes (cf. Matt. 5:3-9). This verse reflects Matt. 5:10-12. The same truth (and same word) is also in I Pet. 3:14. It is so surprising to western materialists that suffering and persecution can bring joy and blessing.

▣ **“the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you”** This is either an allusion to (1) an experience similar to Christ's baptism (cf. Matt. 3:16; John 1:32) or (2) how the Spirit empowered the Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:2, 42:2, 59:21, 61:1). Jesus' experience of suffering is now ours (cf. Rom. 8:17). The Spirit's presence does not bring health, wealth, and prosperity, but persecution (cf. John 15:18; 17:14). Jesus promised the Spirit's presence and help in times of persecution (cf. Matt. 10:16-23, esp. v. 20).

There are several variations (4) of this phrase in the Greek manuscripts. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the one cited in NASB a “A” rating (certain).

The Textus Receptus adds a phrase at this point which is reflected in the KJV and the NKJV: “On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” This phrase appears in differing forms only in later uncial manuscripts (i.e., K from the 9<sup>th</sup> century; L from the 8<sup>th</sup> century; and P from the 6<sup>th</sup> century) and is probably not original. The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its omission as “certain.”

**4:15 “none of you suffers as a”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act that is already in process.

▣ **“troublesome meddler”** This word is used only here in all of Greek literature. It is a compound from two Greek words, “belonging to another” (i.e., *allotrios*) and “look over” or “inspect” (i.e., *episkopos*). This then refers to someone who meddles in the affairs of others, a busybody.

**4:16 “if”** This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true. Christians were suffering simply because they were Christians.

▣ **“a Christian”** This was originally a term of derision (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28). It is only used three times in the NT. It meant “little Christ” (i.e., *Christianos*). It became the common designation for believers by the middle of the first century (i.e., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15:44).

▣ **“he is not to be ashamed”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually implies to stop an act already in process. This may be a flashback for Peter to Jesus’ night trials where he was ashamed (cf. Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:16-18,25-27).

**4:17 “For it is time for judgment to begin”** This may be an allusion to Mal. 3:1-6 where judgment starts with the Messiah coming suddenly and surprisingly to His own people (to whom much is given, much is required, cf. Jer. 25:29). If there are willfully unrepentant sinners among God’s people (and there are) they will be judged first. Their only hope is the unchanging character of YHWH (cf. Mal. 1:6).

This phrase may also be a Jewish idiom of the nearness of the Second Coming of Christ as Judge. The OT Jews (and the NT Apostles) envisioned a catastrophic conclusion to human history, often called “the birth pains of the new age,” which is clearly stated by Jesus Himself in Mark 13:8.

▣ **“the household of God”** There are two building metaphors in I Peter that relate to the church: (1) the church as a temple built from living stones (cf. 2:4-10) and (2) the church as the household of God (corporate metaphor of people or large family home, cf. 4:17; I Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6).

▣ **“if”** This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, as are vv. 16 and 18.

**4:18 “IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED”** This is an allusion to Pro. 11:31 in the Septuagint (“if the righteous is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?”).

**4:19 “those who suffer according to the will of God”** If in this world it is the “righteous” who suffer (FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE of v. 18), what will it be like for the unrighteous in the day of God’s judgment? The Lord is with the saved (cf. 3:12,14), but against the rebellious unbeliever and persecutor (cf. 3:12).

▣ **“shall entrust their souls”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE implying they themselves need to continue to entrust themselves to God. Paul entrusted the gospel to Timothy (cf. I Tim. 1:18). Paul entrusted the gospel to believers to pass on (cf. II Tim. 2:2). It is a banking term for a “deposit.” Jesus used this same term at the time of His death on the cross. He entrusted His soul to the Father (cf. Luke 23:46).

▣ **“a faithful Creator”** God is faithful! This is the basic affirmation of the Bible (cf. Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:9; Isa. 40:8; 49:7; 55:11; I Cor. 1:9; 10:23; II Cor. 1:18; I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 2:13 and I Pet. 1:19). It is the unchanging character of God (cf. Mal. 3:6) that is the sure hope of every believer. God will do what He has said He will do!

▣ **“in doing what is right”** This Greek term means “do good” or “well doing.” This is a repeated theme in I Peter (cf. 2:14,15,20; 3:6,17; 4:19). This letter is dominated by the admonitions to live right and be prepared to suffer. See Special Topic: Why Do Christians Suffer? at 4:14.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the things that believers are to do because of the imminence of the Second Coming.
2. Did the NT writers expect the Lord’s coming to be soon or much later?
3. How does love cover sins? Whose sins?
4. Does each and every Christian have a spiritual gift? If so, why?
5. Is persecution normal or abnormal for believers?
6. What is the purpose of innocent suffering and trials in the lives of believers?
7. How should a Christian respond to innocent persecution?
8. Will Christians be judged? How? Why? When? Where?

# I PETER 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Teaching the Flock of God	Shepherd the Flock	Concluding Exhortations and Greetings	The Flock of God	Instructions: To the Elders
5:1-4	5:1-4	5:1-5	5:1-4	5:1-4
	Submit to God, Resist the Devil			Instructions: To the Faithful
5:5	5:5-11		5:5-7	5:5-11
5:6-7		5:6-11		
5:8-11			5:8-11	
Final Greetings	Farewell and Peace		Final Greetings	Last Words Greetings
5:12-14	5:12-14	5:12-14a	5:12	5:12
			5:13-14a	5:13
		5:14b	5:14b	5:14

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v in the introductory article entitled “Guide to Good Bible Reading”)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup>You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

**5:1 “elders. . .fellow elder”** There is a play on the term elder (*presbuteros*) in vv. 1 and 5. The term is apparently used as a title of leadership (cf. v. 1) and a designation of age (cf. v. 5). The use of this term is surprising considering that it is basically the Jewish tribal designation of leadership, while “bishop” or “overseer” (*episcopos*) was the Greek city-state designation for leadership. I Peter uses Jewish terms to address Gentile believers.

Peter calls himself a “fellow elder,” the term *presbuteros* plus the PREPOSITION *syn*, which implies “joint participation with.” Peter does not assert his Apostolic authority (cf. II John 1 where another Apostle calls himself “elder”), but admonishes (i.e., “I exhort,” a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) the local leaders to act and live appropriately in the light of

1. Christ’s example
2. nearness of His return

The early churches did not have paid positions of leadership, but recognized the God-given gifts of ministry and leadership within each local church. This affirmation of giftedness had to be balanced with the cultural reverence for “aged-wisdom,” especially among the Jewish believing community. Therefore, Peter addresses both types of leadership.

Also notice that “elders” is PLURAL. This may refer to (1) a number of house church leaders (cf. Acts 20:17) or (2) the different spiritual gifts among a body of leaders (cf. Eph. 4:11), which clearly states that ministry belongs to all believers. This is parallel to the concept of “a kingdom of priests” (cf. 2:5,9).

▣ **“witness of the suffering of Christ”** This is an affirmation of Peter’s eyewitness recollection of the life of Jesus (cf. Acts 3:15; 10:39). It may also reflect Peter’s memory of Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8. The term “suffering” refers to the crucifixion. Peter uses the term suffering often (cf. 1:11; 2:19,20,21,23; 3:14,17,18; 4:1[twice],13,15,19; 5:1,10). This discussion about Jesus’ suffering as both redemptive and as an example believers are to emulate, forms a major theme in I Peter.

▣ **“partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed”** This is not only a future reference to the Second Coming (cf. 1:5,7; 4:13; 5:4), but possibly a backward eyewitness (flashback) reference to the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17; Mark 9:2-8; II Pet. 1:16-18). See Special Topic: Glory at Mark 10:37.

**5:2 “shepherd the flock of God”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. “Shepherd” is an OT metaphor for God (cf. Ps. 23:1; 100:3). It became a title for leaders (cf. Ezek. 34:7-10). Sheep needed constant care, protection, and attention. Jesus is called the “Good Shepherd” in John 10 and He tells Peter to be a pastor to His sheep in John 21.

In the NT there are several titles for local church leaders.

1. elders
2. overseers or bishops
3. shepherds or pastors

These seem to be used interchangeably (cf. Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7).



NASB	“exercising oversight”
NKJV	“serving as overseers”
NRSV	“exercising the oversight”
TEV	-omits-
NJB	-omits-

Several ancient Greek manuscripts (i.e., P<sup>72</sup>,  $\aleph^2$ , A, P, and the Vulgate) include the VERBAL form (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) of “overseer” used in conjunction with the work of elders. Some ancient manuscripts omit the PARTICIPLE (i.e.,  $\aleph^*$  and B). It is uncertain whether the omission is purposeful by scribes uncomfortable with mixing the offices or roles of elders and overseers.

**5:2-3** This begins a series (cf. vv. 2-3) of contrasting qualifications for church leaders.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
1. voluntary	not under compulsion
2. with eagerness	not for sordid gain
3. as an example	not lording it over

One wonders how much these negatives reflect actual conditions of the leadership of some of the house churches related to the false teachers (cf. II Peter).

▣ **“according to the will of God”** This phrase is present in many ancient Greek manuscripts (i.e., P<sup>72</sup>,  $\aleph$ , A<sup>2</sup>, and P), but it is omitted in MSS B, K, and L. It is present in most modern English translations, but absent in the KJV. Peter uses this phrase often in I Peter (cf. 2:15; 3:17; 4:2,3,19). Therefore, it was probably original.

▣ **“examples”** See Special Topic following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (*TUPOS*)

The problem is the word *tupos*, which has a variety of uses.

1. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 645
  - a. pattern
  - b. plan
  - c. form or manner of writing
  - d. decree or rescript
  - e. sentence or decision
  - f. model of human body as votive offerings to the healing god
  - g. VERB used in the sense of enforcing the precepts of the law
2. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 249
  - a. scar (cf. John 20:25)
  - b. image (cf. Acts 7:43)
  - c. model (cf. Heb. 8:5)
  - d. example (cf. I Cor. 10:6; Phil. 3:17)
  - e. archetype (cf. Rom. 5:14)
  - f. kind (cf. Acts 23:25)
  - g. contents (cf. Acts 23:25)
3. Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 411
  - a. a blow, an impression, a mark (cf. John 20:25)
  - b. a delineation
  - c. an image (cf. Acts 7:43)
  - d. a formula, scheme (cf. Rom. 6:17)
  - e. form, purport (cf. Acts 23:25)
  - f. a figure, counterpart (cf. I Cor. 10:6)
  - g. an anticipative figure, type (cf. Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 10:11)
  - h. a model pattern (cf. Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5)
  - i. a moral pattern (cf. Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:7; II Thess. 3:9; I Tim. 4:12; I Pet. 5:3)

In this context # i above seems best. The gospel has both doctrine and lifestyle implications. The free gift of salvation in Christ also demands a life like Christ!

**5:4 “the Chief Shepherd”** Peter’s terminology for Christ as Shepherd (cf. 2:25) may have come from his conversation with the resurrected Lord recorded in John 21:15-17. Here Peter calls Christ by the compound term *archi* plus *poimen*, meaning the high or first shepherd (cf. John 10:1-18). In Heb. 13:20 Christ is described as “the great Shepherd.” All other leaders (“elders” or “overseers”) are under-shepherds.

It is possible that Peter is alluding to Isa. 63:11, where Moses is called “shepherd.”

▣ **“appears”** This is another reference to the Second Coming (cf. v. 1; 1:5,7; 4:13).

▣ **“unfading crown of glory”** In context (i.e., vv. 1-5) this refers to the “under shepherds.” Peter mixes an athletic metaphor (cf. I Cor. 9:23) with a floral metaphor. This unfading crown of glory may refer to the believer’s inheritance guarded by God in I Pet. 1:4. It is parallel to

1. Paul’s “crown of righteousness” in II Tim. 4:8
2. James’ “crown of life” in James 1:12
3. Jesus’ “crown of life” in Rev. 2:10; 3:11

It is a symbol of the believer’s victory in the battle against sin, self, as well as their patient, faithful suffering for Christ’s sake.

**5:5 “you younger men”** In Jewish society a man was considered young until forty years of age. There was to be no generation gap or warfare within the believing community, but mutual respect (i.e., “likewise” of v. 5).

▣ **“be subject to your elders”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE describing a settled manner of life. The context implies that the “elders” of v. 1 are the same as the “elders” of v. 5. However, “younger” must reflect an age contrast (cf. I Tim. 5:1, which refers to an older person, while I Tim. 5:17 refers to a church leader). See Special Topic: Submission at 2:13.

▣ **“and all of you”** Peter is moving from admonitions to church leaders and other men of the congregation to all members of the church (cf. Eph. 5:21). It is crucial that believers understand their personal responsibility for peace and unity in the fellowship (cf. Eph. 4:2-3).

▣ **“clothe yourselves”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. Putting on and taking off clothing is a biblical idiom for believers’ ethical lifestyles (cf. Job 29:14; Ps. 109:29; Isa. 61:10; Eph. 4:22,24,25,31). They are to put on the characteristics of God and strip themselves of any competitive spirit.

The Greek term for “clothe” is literally “gird.” It is possible that Peter is reflecting on Jesus’ actions in the upper room, recorded in John 13:2-11 (Jesus girds Himself with a slave’s apron and washes the disciples’ feet). Peter had seen true humility and now calls on believers to emulate Christ (cf. Phil. 2:8; James 4:10).

▣ **“humility”** This is a compound term of “humility” and “mind.” See note at 3:8.

▣ **“toward one another”** This is an emphasis on community (cf. 3:9; Eph. 5:21). Believers are given (and gifted, cf. I Cor. 12:7) for one another. We stand or fall together!

▣ **“FOR GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE”** This is a quote from Pro. 3:34 (cf. James 4:6). The term “grace” is used in its OT sense of “favor.”

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-11**

**“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. <sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. <sup>11</sup>To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

**5:6 “humble yourselves”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a characteristic of Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) which becomes a standard for His followers (cf. James 4:10).

▣ **“the mighty hand of God”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase (cf. James 4:6,10) which speaks of God’s care, provision, and faithful love, even amidst persecution. He is the “unseen hand,” as in Esther!

▣ **“that He may exalt you”** This reflects Jesus’ words in Matt. 23:12 and James’ admonition in James 4:6. YHWH is regularly depicted as resisting the proud and exalting the lowly (cf. Job 5:11; Ps. 138:6; Pro. 3:34; Ezek. 17:24; 21:26).

▣	
NASB	“at the proper time”
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	“in due time”
TEV	“in his own time”

In context this serves two theological purposes: (1) currently these readers are going through persecution, not exaltation and (2) the time of exaltation is at the Second Coming. Alertness, humility, and lack of anxiety are crucial in the face of Satanic-inspired persecution.

**5:7 “casting all your anxiety on Him”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE and may be an allusion to Ps. 55:22 in the Septuagint. This is an idiom of mentally placing one’s concerns on Christ (cf. Matt. 6:25). He carries them for us even amidst persecution and suffering. He bore our sin and now He bears our anxiety and fear!

Believers can do this because we know He cares for us. We know this from:

1. His death (cf. 2:22-24; 3:18)
2. His intercession (cf. I John 2:1-2)
3. His shepherding (cf. 2:25; 5:4)

**5:8 “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert”** These are AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. Believers are to make a decisive choice to be mentally alert (cf. Matt. 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; Mark 13:35,37; 14:38; Acts 20:31; I Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:6,10; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15). Peter has emphasized these (i.e., sober and alert) before (cf. 1:13; 4:7). Alertness and proper thinking can overcome anxiety and temptation.



▣ **“Your adversary, the devil”** The term “adversary” reflects the Hebrew title for Satan (used 36 times in the NT), which means adversary. The title “devil” (used 37 times in the NT) is a Greek compound “to throw across” meaning to cast aspersions. See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL**

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (i.e., Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan (BDB 966) or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Gen. 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. They become the origin of evil in rabbinical theology. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e., Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28, where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. There are two high gods of Persian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil. This dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Lk. 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **“prowls around like a roaring lion”** This animal metaphor for Satan probably comes from the OT.

1. symbol of powerful enemy (cf. Ps. 7:2; 10:2; 17:12; 22:13,21; II Tim. 4:17)
2. one of God’s ways to judge His people (cf. II Kgs. 17:25; Isa. 15:9; Jer. 50:17)

▣ **“seeking someone to devour”** Satan’s ultimate purpose is revealed—destruction and death. He is an enemy of all that is good, godly, and true.

**5:9 “resist him”** This is another AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. In Jesus believers have the power to resist evil and the evil one! In James 4:7 this same admonition is linked to Satan fleeing, but here it is linked to ongoing suffering and persecution. Victory over the devil is not the absence of suffering!

▣ **“firm in your faith”** Believers must continue in their faith (cf. Col. 2:5). Prosperity and health are not always signs of God’s blessings (cf. Job, Ps. 73). Believers must exercise their faith in any and all circumstances. Continuance is crucial (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE**

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern, dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both poles are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Some examples:

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a life-time commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or a faith and repentant response on mankind’s part to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem starts with seemingly conflicting passages of the NT:

1. texts on assurance
  - a. statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
  - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
  - d. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
  - a. statements of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13)
  - b. statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel (John 8:31; 15:4-10)
  - c. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23; II Tim. 3:2)
  - d. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
  - e. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21; 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit. Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus’ death dealt with the sin problem of the fallen creation! God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible addresses two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives or (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings of perseverance! Which group are you in?

There is a historical theological controversy involving Augustine versus Pelagius and Calvin versus Arminius (semi-Pelagian). The issue involves the question of salvation: if one is truly saved, must he persevere in faith and fruitfulness?

The Calvinists line up behind those biblical texts that assert God’s sovereignty and keeping-power (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:31-39; I John 5:13,18; I Pet. 1:3-5) and VERB TENSES like the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES of Eph. 2:5,8.

The Arminians line up behind those biblical texts that warn believers to “hold on,” “hold out,” or “continue” (Matt. 10:22; 24:9-13; Mark 13:13; John 15:4-6; I Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). I personally do not believe that Hebrews 6 and 10 are applicable, but many Arminians use them as a warning against apostasy. The parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 addresses the issue of apparent belief, as does John 8:31-59. As Calvinists quote the PERFECT TENSE VERBS used to describe salvation, the Arminians quote the PRESENT TENSE passages like I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15.

This is a perfect example of how theological systems abuse the proof-texting method of interpretation. Usually a guiding principle or chief text is used to construct a theological grid by which all other texts are viewed. Be careful of grids from any source. They come from western logic, not revelation. The Bible is an eastern book. It presents truth in tension-filled, seemingly paradoxical pairs. Christians are meant to affirm both and live within the tension. The NT presents both the security of the believer and the demand for continuing faith and godliness. Christianity is an initial response of repentance and faith followed by a continuing response of repentance and faith. Salvation is not a product (a ticket to heaven or a fire insurance policy), but a relationship. It is a decision and discipleship. It is described in the NT in all VERB TENSES:

AORIST (completed action), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5

PERFECT (completed action with continuing results), Eph. 2:5,8

PRESENT (continuing action), I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15

FUTURE (future events or certain events), Rom. 5:8,10; 10:9; I Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; I Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28

▣ **“knowing that the same experiences are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world”** Peter uses the common experience of believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire as an encouragement to these persecuted believers. Their experience was not unusual, but normative.

**5:10 “After you have suffered for a little while”** This refers to this life (cf. 1:6).

▣ **“the God of all grace”** The hope of all believers is the settled, unchanging character of a loving, gracious, merciful God. Although we live in a fallen world of evil and rebellion, when we trust Him nothing can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 78-79, has a wonderful list of the GENITIVE phrase used to describe God.

1. God of peace – Rom. 15:33; 16:20; I Cor. 14:33; I Thess. 5:23; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20
2. God of mercy – Luke 1:78
3. God of all comfort – Rom. 12:1; II Cor. 1:3
4. God of all grace – I Pet. 5:10,12
5. God of love – I Cor. 13:11
6. not the God of confusion – I Cor. 14:33

▣ **“who called you to His eternal glory in Christ”** This is another emphasis on our identification with Christ. We are identified with Him now in His death (cf. Rom. 6:4) and suffering (cf. Rom. 8:17), but also His resurrection and glory (cf. II Cor. 4:17; II Tim. 2:10). This eternal glory only comes experientially at physical death or the Second Coming!

**5:11 “will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you”** God’s goal for all believers is Christlikeness through suffering and struggles (cf. 4:13; Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 3:19; II Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:10; 5:8). Yet it is He Himself who provides all that is necessary. Here again is the paradoxical covenant concept. God does His part and we must do our part!

▣ **“to Him be dominion forever and ever”** This restates 4:11, except here there is no VERB. So many of the themes of I Peter (like I John) are like patterns in tapestries or melodies in music repeated with slight variation. God is in control of all things (cf. Rom. 11:36).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12-14a**

<sup>12</sup>Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! <sup>13</sup>She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark. <sup>14</sup>Greet one another with a kiss of love.

**5:12 “Through Silvanus”** This is the Silas of Acts 15:40. This man was Peter’s source, along with John Mark, of Paul’s theology and writings. Peter’s writings are very similar to Paul’s in many ways.

There has been much speculation concerning this phrase’s relationship to the authorship of I Peter. I think there is no doubt Peter used a scribe, but was it Silvanus? An interesting article in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 43 No. 3, pp. 417-432, entitled “Silvanus Was Not Peter’s Secretary” by E. Randolph Richards, has convinced me that this phrase probably refers to Silvanus bearing the letter to its readers, not necessarily penning it for Peter.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SILAS - SILVANUS

Silas, or Silvanus, was the man Paul chose to go with him on the second missionary journey after Barnabas and John Mark went back to Cyprus.

- A. He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 15:22, where he is called a chief man among the brethren of the Jerusalem Church.
- B. He was also a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
- C. He was a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37).
- D. He and Judas Barsabbas were sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church to inspect the situation (cf. Acts 15:22,30-35).
- E. Paul mentions him in II Cor. 1:19 as a fellow gospel preacher.
- F. Later he is identified with Peter in writing I Peter. (cf. I Pet. 5:12).
- G. Both Paul and Peter call him Silvanus, while Luke calls him Silas (the Aramaic form of Saul). It is possible that Silas was his Jewish name and Silvanus his Latin name (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, p. 213).

▣ **“the true grace of God”** By the date of Peter’s writings, other views of Jesus had developed. Peter asserts there is but one true grace—gospel. Peter has emphasized the grace of God often in I Peter (cf. 1:10,13; 2:3; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5,10,12). The gospel of Jesus Christ truly reflects the heart of YHWH. It is called “true” here because it has been experienced in the lives of these suffering believers!

▣ **“stand firm in it”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This was significant in a day of persecution. “Standing” relates to “firm in your faith” in v. 9. It is an attitude towards God, towards Christ and away from sin, self, and Satan. It is a military term in Eph. 6:11,13,14. Paul uses it in several different ways.

- 1. gospel summary in I Cor. 15:1
- 2. explanation of “justification by faith” in Rom. 5:2
- 3. admonitions to Gentiles to keep the faith in Rom. 11:20
- 4. warning about spiritual arrogance in I Cor. 10:12

Believers have a covenantal responsibility to stand firm ! See Special Topic: Perseverance at 5:9.

**5:13 “she”** Churches were often personified as female (cf. II John) probably because of the OT concept of YHWH as husband and Israel as wife (cf. Hos. 1-3). The church is the bride of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:21-31).

▣ **“Babylon”** This is probably a cryptic reference to Rome (cf. Rev. 14:8; 17:5; 18:2,10; Sibylline Oracles 5:143,152; Baruch 9:1). Rome, in Peter’s day, was emblematic of the world powers of the OT (i.e., Assyria, Babylon, Persia). It was typical of a world system of power, arrogance, and idolatry apart from God (cf. Eph. 2:2a).

Peter was writing from the lair of the beast itself. God’s church was established in the enemy’s territory.

▣ **“Mark”** This refers to John Mark. The early church met in his family’s house in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:12). It was also the site of the Lord’s three post resurrection appearances and the coming of the Spirit.

John Mark accompanied Paul and his cousin Barnabas (cf. Col. 4:10) on the first missionary journey (cf. Acts 12:25-13:13). For some reason he deserted the team and returned home (cf. Acts 15:38). Barnabas wanted to include him on the second missionary journey, but Paul refused (cf. Acts 15:36-41). This resulted in Paul and Barnabas separating. Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus (cf. Acts 15:39). Later, while Paul was in prison, he mentions John Mark in a positive way (cf. Col. 4:10) and still later in Paul’s second imprisonment at Rome, just before his death, he mentions John Mark again (cf. II Tim. 4:11).

Apparently John Mark became part of Peter’s missionary team (cf. I Pet. 5:13). Eusebius’ *Eccl. His.* 3:39:12 gives us an interesting account of John Mark’s relation to Peter.

“In his own book Papias gives us accounts of the Lord’s sayings obtained from Aristion or learnt direct from the presbyter John. Having brought these to the attention of scholars, I must now follow up the statements already quoted from him with a piece of information which he sets out regarding Mark, the writer of the gospel:

This, too, the presbyter used to say. ‘Mark, who had been Peter’s interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord’s sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of His followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter’s. Peter used to adapt his teaching to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord’s sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things just as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only— to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it’” (p. 152).

In this quote Papias refers to “John the elder,” in *Against Heresies* 5:33:4, Irenaeus says “and these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp.” This implies Papias heard it from John the Apostle. John Mark rewrote Peter’s memories and sermons about Jesus into a Gospel.

**5:14 “a kiss of love”** This was the typical cultural greeting among family members. It was initially adopted by the family of God (cf. Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:6). By the fourth century A.D. this kiss was limited to the same sex because of the abuses within the church and misunderstandings from outside the church. This ritual fellowship act was a regular part of the Lord’s Supper or Love Feast.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:14b**

**<sup>14b</sup>Peace be to you all who are in Christ.**

**5:14b** Only those in Christ can have peace (cf. Luke 2:14). Those who have Christ’s peace usually do not have the world’s peace (cf. Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:49-53; John 14:27).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List and explain the NT terms used for the leader of local house churches.
2. List the four admonitions to pastors in vv. 2-3.
3. List allusions to Peter’s personal contact with Jesus that are mentioned in this chapter.
4. How is suffering related to Christian maturity? To the Devil?

# INTRODUCTION TO II PETER

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. The purpose or scope of this introduction is not to discuss in detail the problems connected to the authorship of II Peter. I personally have concluded that there is no compelling reason to deny Peter's authorship. Three sources have been helpful in thinking through this issue.
  - 1. Bruce M. Metzger's article "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha" in *The Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature*, 1972, pp. 3-24.
  - 2. Michael J. Kruger's article "The Authenticity of 2 Peter" in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 645-671.
  - 3. E. M. B. Green's book *2 Peter Reconsidered*, Tyndale Press, 1961.
- B. As I think about the possibility that II Peter was not written by Peter, many things go through my mind.
  - 1. Who wrote II Peter does not change my view that it is inspired and trustworthy. Authorship affects hermeneutics, not inspiration, which is a faith presupposition and a documentable historical process.
  - 2. Why am I bothered by pseudonymity? Apparently the first century Greco-Roman world was accustomed to it (Metzger's article).
  - 3. Am I unwilling to allow it because of my own preferences or am I able to honestly evaluate the historical and textual evidence? Has tradition predisposed me to a certain conclusion?
  - 4. The ancient church questioned Peter's authorship, but not the book's message (except the Syrian church). It is an orthodox message in theological unity with other NT books with many affinities to Peter's sermons in Acts.
- C. Eusebius used three categories to describe Christian writings:
  - 1. accepted
  - 2. disputed
  - 3. spuriousHe included II Peter along with James, Jude, II John, and III John in category 2 (i.e., disputed). Eusebius accepted I Peter; had doubts about II Peter, and rejected as spurious other supposed writings of Peter (1) the Acts of Peter; (2) the Gospel of Peter; (3) the Preaching of Peter; and (4) the Apocalypse of Peter.

## AUTHORSHIP

- A. This is the most disputed NT book as to traditional authorship.
- B. The reasons for these doubts are both internal (its style and content) and external (its late acceptance).

### INTERNAL CONCERNS

- 1. Style
  - a. The style is very different from I Peter. This was recognized by Origen and Jerome.
    - (1) Origen acknowledged that some rejected Peter's authorship, yet he quoted from II Peter six times in his writings.
    - (2) Jerome attributed this to Peter's use of a different scribe. He also acknowledges that some in his day rejected Peter's authorship.
    - (3) Eusebius addresses this concern in *Eccl. His.* 3:3:1: "but the so-called second Epistle we have not received as canonical, but nevertheless it has appeared useful to many, and has been studied with other Scripture."
  - b. The style of II Peter is very distinctive. In *The Epistle of James, Peter and Jude* in the Anchor Bible, pp. 146-147, B. Reicke calls it "Asianism."  
"It was called 'Asian' style because its foremost representatives came from Asia Minor, and it was characterized by a loaded, verbose, high-sounding manner of expression leaning toward the novel and bizarre, and careless about violating classic ideals of simplicity. . . Our epistle was undoubtedly written in conformity with the rules of the Asian school which was still important during the first Christian century."
  - c. It is possible that Peter attempted to write in a language (i.e., Koine Greek) in which he was not fully functional. His mother tongue was Aramaic.

2. Genre
  - a. Is this a typical first century letter?
    - (1) it has a typical opening and close
    - (2) it, however, seems to be a cyclical letter to several churches, like Galatians, Ephesians, James, and I John
  - b. It may be a specialized Jewish genre called “testament,” which is characterized by
    - (1) a farewell discourse
      - a) Deuteronomy 31-33
      - b) Joshua 24
      - c) the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
      - d) John 13-17
      - e) Acts 20:17-28
    - (2) a prediction of imminent death (cf. II Timothy)
    - (3) an admonition of his hearers to keep on in his tradition
3. The relation between II Peter 2 and Jude
  - a. There has obviously been some literary borrowing.
  - b. The allusion to non-canonical sources has caused many to reject both Jude and II Peter, yet even I Peter makes allusion to I Enoch and Paul even quotes Greek poets.
4. The book itself claims to be from Peter the Apostle
  - a. He is named in 1:1. He is called Symeon Peter. Peter is the name given to him by Jesus (cf. Matt. 16). Symeon (not Simon) is rare and unusual. If someone were trying to write in Peter’s name the choice of this Semitic spelling is very surprising and counterproductive to pseudonymity.
  - b. He claims to be an eye-witness to the transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) in 1:16-18.
  - c. He claims to have written a first letter (cf. 3:1), which implies I Peter.
5. Orthodoxy
  - a. There is nothing in this letter which contradicts NT Apostolic teaching.
  - b. There are a few unique items (i.e., world destroyed by fire and Paul’s writings seen as Scripture), but nothing gnostic or adoptionistic or obviously heretical.

## EXTERNAL CONCERNS

1. Eusebius lists Christian writings of the first and second centuries in three categories
  - a. accepted
  - b. disputed
  - c. spurious
 II Peter, along with Hebrews, James, II and III John are listed in the disputed category.
2. II Peter does not appear in the Marcion canon (A.D. 154), but Marcion also rejected many other NT books.
3. II Peter does not appear in the Muratorian Fragment (A.D. 180-200), but the list seems to be damaged and it also does not list Hebrews, James, or I Peter.
4. It was rejected by the Eastern (Syrian) church
  - a. not in the Peshitta (first half of the fifth century)
  - b. was included in the Philoxeniana (A.D. 507) from Iraq and the Harclean version (A.D. 616) from north Africa
  - c. Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia (i.e., leaders of the Antiochian school of interpretation) rejected all the catholic epistles.
5. II Peter seems to be quoted in “the Gospel of Truth” and “the Apocryphon of John” found in the Nag Hammadi gnostic texts (cf. *The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible* by Andrew K. Helmbold, p. 91). These writings in Coptic are translations of earlier Greek texts. If II Peter is alluded to then it is impossible for it to have been written in the second century.
6. It is included in P<sup>72</sup>, dated by the UBS<sup>4</sup> (p. 8) as third or fourth century.
7. It is alluded to or quoted by Clement of Rome (A.D. 95)
  - a. I Clement (9:2 - II Peter 1:17)
  - b. I Clement (23:3 - II Peter 3:4)
  - c. I Clement (35:5 - II Peter 2:2)
8. It may be alluded to in Justin Martyr’s (A.D. 115-165) *Dialogue with Trypho* 82:1 - II Pet. 2:1. These are the only two places in ancient Christian writings where the Greek term *pseudoprophetai* is used.
9. Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) possibly alludes to II Peter (he is quoted by Eusebius’ *His. Eccl.* 5:32:2 - II Pet. 3:8 and 3:1:1 - II Pet. 1:15).
10. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) wrote the first commentary (though it is now lost) on II Peter.
11. It appears in Athanasius’ Easter letter (A.D. 367), which was a current list of canonical books.
12. It was accepted as canonical by the early church councils of Laodicea (A.D. 372) and Carthage (A.D. 397).

13. It is interesting that other supposed writings of Peter (i.e., the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Andrew and Peter, the Acts of Peter and Paul, Passion of Peter and Paul, the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Preaching of Peter) were all rejected by the early churches as spurious (i.e., non-inspired).
- C. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (p. 174) makes the comment that II Peter may have been Peter writing himself without the use of a scribe (i.e., Silas in I Peter 5:12 and John Mark for the Gospel. For evidence he asserts that I Peter uses the Septuagint exclusively in OT quotes, but II Peter (cf. 2:22) uses the MT of Pro. 26:11, which denotes a Hebraic background.

## DATE

- A. This depends on authorship.
- B. If one is convinced of Peter's authorship then sometime before his death (cf. 1:14).
- C. Church tradition asserts that the Apostle Peter died in Rome while Nero was Caesar. Nero instituted persecution towards Christians in A.D. 64. He killed himself in A.D. 68.
- D. If a follower of Peter wrote in his name, then a date as late as A.D. 130-150 is possible because II Peter is quoted in the *Apocalypse of Peter* as well as *The Gospel of Truth* and *Apocryphon of John*.
- E. The renowned American archaeologist W. F. Albright asserts that it was written before A.D. 80 because of its similarities to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## RECIPIENTS

- A. If I Peter is referred to in II Peter 3:1 then the recipients would be the same (i.e., northern Turkey).
- B. II Peter may be a testimonial to encourage all believers to persevere under trial, resist false teachers, and live faithfully in the gospel tradition in anticipation of the Second Coming.

## OCCASION

- A. As I Peter addresses persecution and suffering, II Peter addresses false teachers.
- B. The exact nature of the false teaching is uncertain, but it may be related to antinomian gnosticism (cf. 2:1-22; 3:15-18). This book uses technical vocabulary employed by both incipient gnosticism and the mystery religions. This may have been a purposeful apologetic technique attacking their theology.
- C. This book, like II Thessalonians, addresses the subject of a delayed, but certain, Second Coming, wherein God's children will be glorified and unbelievers judged (cf. 3:3-4). It is interesting that I Peter characteristically uses the term *apocalupsis* to refer to Jesus' return, while II Peter uses *parousia*. This possibly reflects the use of different scribes (i.e., Jerome).

## READING CYCLE ONE (see p. v)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)



## READING CYCLE TWO (see pp. v)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# II PETER 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting the Faithful	Salutation	Introduction	Greetings
1:1-2	1:1-4	1:1-2	1:1 1:2	1:1-2
The Christian's Call and Election		Exhortations to Holiness	God's Call and Election	The Generosity of God
1:3-11		1:3-11	1:3-9	1:3-11
	Fruitful Growth in the Faith			
	1:5-11			
	Peter's Approaching Death			The Apostolic Witness
1:12-15	1:12-15	1:12-15	1:12-15	1:12-15
Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word	The Trustworthy Prophetic Word		Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory	
1:16-21	1:16-21	1:16-18	1:16-18	1:16-18
				The Value of Prophecy
		1:19-21	1:19-21	1:19-21

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

---

\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when one understands the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO VERSES 1-11

- A. Verses 1-11 are one sentence in Greek which combines both aspects of covenant: a sovereign free grace and the mandated Christlike life.
- B. The outline seems to be
  - 1. traditional introduction (vv. 1-2)
    - a. from whom
    - b. to whom
    - c. greeting
  - 2. verses 3-4— God's part
  - 3. verses 5-7— believer's part
  - 4. verses 8-9— positive and negative aspects of faithfulness
  - 5. verses 10-11— assurance through lifestyle godliness

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup>seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup>For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. <sup>5</sup>Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup>and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup>for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

**1:1 “Simon”** This is literally “Symeon” (see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, p. 699). This is Peter's Hebrew name, and the name of one of the Twelve tribes. This same form appears only in Acts 15:14. If this letter were a pseudonym, the author surely would have used the more common spelling “Simon.”

▣ **“Peter”** This is literally *Petros*, which is Greek for a large rock or boulder. It was the nickname given to Simon by Jesus in Matt. 16:18 and also John 1:42. In this passage in John the Aramaic term *Cephas* is mentioned. In daily conversation Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew nor Greek. Paul often uses *Cephas* (cf. I Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9,11,14).

There has been much discussion between Catholic and Protestant Bible scholars about the significance of this name change (which has OT significance of Abram, Jacob, etc.). In Matt. 16:18 Peter the rock is said to be the foundation of the church. Protestants have always made it a theological point to note that “Peter” is MASCULINE (i.e., *Petros*), but “rock” is FEMININE (i.e., *Petra*), thereby Peter's confession of faith, not Peter himself, is the bedrock of the church. However, this distinction in Greek grammar would not have been present in Aramaic, where *Cephas* would have been used in both places.

As a theologian I do not want to deny the obvious leadership of Peter, but I also realize that the other Apostles did not recognize his priority (cf. Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46; 22:24-27; Matt. 20:20-24). Even though Jesus did not conversationally speak in Greek, the inspired text is recorded in Greek, therefore, the grammatical distinction is assumed to be inspired.

▣ **“a bondservant”** This is the Greek term *doulos*, which refers to a servant or slave. This is either the OT honorific background of “servant of the Lord” (i.e., Moses, Joshua, David, and Isaiah) or the NT focus on humility in relation to Jesus as Lord (cf. Matt. 10:24-25).

▣ **“apostle”** This is obviously a literary way for the author of II Peter to assert his identity as an eyewitness, follower, and chosen disciple of Jesus.

The term “apostle” comes from the Greek VERB “I send” (*apostellō*). Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them “Apostles” (cf. Luke 6:13). This term was often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36, 37,38,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21, 23,25; 20:21). In Jewish sources it was used of someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20). Peter is asserting his Christ-given authority!

It came to have an expanded usage beyond “The Twelve” (cf. Acts 14:4, 14, Barnabas; Rom. 16:7, Andronicus and Junias; I Cor. 4:6, 9; 12:28-29; 15:7, Apollos; Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus; I Thess. 2:6, Silvanus and Timothy). Their exact task is uncertain, but it involves proclamation of the gospel and servant leadership of the church. It is even possible that Rom. 16:7 (KJV “Junia”) refers to a feminine apostle!

▣ **“Jesus Christ”** See notes at I Peter 1:1.



**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** “to those who have received a faith”

**NKJV** “to those who have obtained like precious faith”

**TEV** “to those. . . have been given a faith”

This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE from the term (*lagchanō*), which referred to casting lots

1. as in gambling (cf. John 19:24)
2. as a sense of a duty or obligation (cf. Luke 1:9)
3. as a way of showing divine choice (cf. Acts 1:17)

It can simply mean to “obtain” or “receive,” but it can have the added connotation in the LXX usage of “by the will of God.” This same theme is in vv. 3 and 4 “granted” (twice) and “called”; also note v. 10 “His calling and choosing you.”

This ambiguity is exactly the same as the paradox of salvation. Is salvation by the choice of God or the choice of the one receiving it? The answer is surely yes! The Bible is very clear that this is God’s world. He is involved in all aspects. He has chosen to deal with conscious creation by covenant. He initiates the contact. He sets the agenda, but He has demanded that we respond (i.e., initially and continually).

These readers received a faith that was God’s will for them (and for all).

The term “faith” is from the Greek term *pistis*, which is translated into English as “faith,” “trust,” or “believe.” Originally in Hebrew this concept referred to a stable stance, but it came to denote someone who was faithful, loyal, trustworthy, or dependable. In the Bible it is not the believer’s faith, but God’s faithfulness; not the believer’s trust, but God’s trustworthiness. See Special Topic at Mark 1:15.



**NASB** “of the same kind as ours”

**NKJV** “like precious”

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB** “as precious as”

This is the Greek compound term *isotimos*, a compound of *isos* (i.e., equal, like, or corresponding to) and *timē* (i.e., price, value, or worth with the connotation of precious or costly). The faith given by God was of inestimable value (cf. I Pet. 1:7) and all believers share in the same kind of faith. There is not one faith for Apostles and another for Jews and Gentiles or for other believers (cf. I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). There are different gifts, but only one faith (cf. Eph. 4:5).

▣ **“righteousness”** This refers not to our imputed righteousness (cf. Romans 4), but to Christ’s (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; I John 2:1,29; 3:7). See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Pet. 3:14. This is the clearest place in the NT where *Theos* is applied to Jesus.

This Greek root (which reflects the Hebrew root צָרַק, BDB 841) is used several times in II Peter.

1. righteous, just (*dikaaios*) – 2:8, righteous man
2. righteous, justice (*dikniosunē*)
  - 1:1 – Jesus’ righteousness
  - 2:5 – Noah’s righteousness (cf. Gen. 7:1)
  - 2:21 – the way of righteousness
  - 3:13 – the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells
3. right (*dikaion*)
  - 1:13 – right, proper
  - 2:7 – the righteous Lot
  - 2:8 – the righteous man

Jesus is righteous; believers are righteous in Him; therefore, they should live in righteousness, which reflects the new age!

▣ **“our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”** This phrase refers to Jesus alone.

1. the DEFINITE ARTICLE only before the first NOUN (Granville Sharp’s rule)
2. the grammatical form of all four key terms, “God,” “Savior,” “Jesus,” and “Christ” (GENITIVE MASCULINE SINGULARS)
3. the recurrent grammatical form (except “Lord” instead of “God”) in 1:11; 2:20; and 3:18
4. A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 148, reminds us that in II Peter *gnōsis* and *epignōsis* are always used of Jesus

5. there are other places in the NT where Jesus' deity is affirmed (cf. John 1:1; 8:57-58; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6-11; II Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; and I John 5:20), which is shocking in light of OT monotheism

In the OT "Savior" is usually used of YHWH, but occasionally of the Messiah. In the NT it usually refers to God the Father. In Titus the phrase is used three times of the Father (cf. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), yet in the same contexts also of Jesus (cf. 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). In II Peter it is used exclusively and often of Jesus (cf. 1:1,11; 2:20; 3:2,18).

**1:2 "Grace and peace be multiplied to you"** This is similar to I Pet. 1:2. Paul often used "grace and peace," but followed it with "from God our father" and often added "and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Grace reflects the truth that sinful mankind's salvation and fellowship result from the character and provision of God. This new (i.e., restored) relationship with God results in peace. Humans were created for fellowship with God, in whose image we were created, and with each other. Grace always precedes peace! The VERB is an AORIST PASSIVE OPTATIVE. This is a prayer. Peter wants God to give both grace and peace.

▣ **"in the knowledge of God"** The grace and peace are given by God (i.e., PASSIVE VOICE) through an experiential knowledge (*epignōsis*) of both Himself and His Son.

Knowledge is a recurrent theme in II Peter, probably because of the false teachers (i.e., Gnostics), like Colossians and I John.

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>epignōsis</i> (full knowledge); <i>epignōskō</i> (to know fully) |                                |
| 1:2  | 2:21 (twice)                   |
| 1:3  |                                |
| 1:8  |                                |
| 2:20   |                                |
| 2. <i>gnōsis</i> (knowledge)   | <i>ginōskō</i> (to know)       |
| 1:5  | 1:20                           |
| 1:6  | 3:3                            |
|  | <i>gnōrizō</i> (to make known) |
|  | 1:16                           |

The false teachers of chapter two seem to have the characteristics of what was later called antinomian gnosticism. This developed system of philosophical/theological heresy developed in the second century, but had its roots in the first century. It is characterized by an exclusivism based on secret knowledge. Salvation was related to this knowledge, not to ethics. See Special Topic at I Pet. 3:22.

▣ **"of God and of Jesus our Lord"** I made the following grammatical points in 1:1 related to a similar phrase referring solely to Jesus.

1. one ARTICLE
2. all GENITIVE forms

These same grammatical features are found in this phrase also which must add some degree of scepticism about whether v. 1 refers to Jesus alone or to the Father and the Son. However, the difference involves a complicated Greek manuscript variation. The grammar of 1:1 has no variation in the Greek manuscripts. For a complete listing of the variations see the footnote of the United Bible Society's fourth edition Greek New Testament, p. 799 and Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 85).

**1:3-7** This is one long Greek sentence.

**1:3 "seeing"** The NASB (UPDATED) is rather idiomatic here. The PARTICIPLE "seeing" is not in the Greek text.

▣ **"His"** This PRONOUN refers either to God the Father or God the Son. All of the PRONOUNS in these opening verses are similarly ambiguous. This is a characteristic of Peter. It is possible that this is a purposeful ambiguity (i.e., double entendre, as in John's writings). Jesus is identified as "God" in v. 1; both the Father and the Son are linked grammatically in v. 2; and the ADJECTIVE "divine" in v. 3 refers to both.

▣ **"has granted to us"** This is a PERFECT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. This form of the Greek word (*dōreomai* from *didōmi*) is used only in Mark (cf. 15:45) and Peter (cf. I Pet. 1:3,4), which may illustrate Mark's Gospel and I Peter's literary relationship.

▣ **"everything pertaining to life"** Verse three is basically a refutation of the Gnostic false teachers' theological separation of salvation through secret knowledge and daily godly living. Deity provides for eternal life (i.e., *zoe*) and daily Christlikeness (i.e., *eusebeia*). True knowledge is faith in Jesus Christ that impacts daily living. Believers have all they need spiritually in Christ! We do not need to seek a deeper truth experience!

▣ **"godliness"** This compound word (i.e., *eusebia*) comes from "well" and "worship." It has the connotation of daily living acceptable to God. Peter repeatedly emphasizes the need for godliness because of the false teachers' neglect of personal ethics and morality (cf. 1:3,6,7; 2:9; 3:11). See fuller note at 1:6.



NASB	“the true knowledge”
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	“the knowledge”
TEV	“our knowledge”

This is another slap at the false teacher’s emphasis on secret knowledge (cf. 2:20-21). The gospel, as preached by the Apostles, is the true knowledge and Jesus is the truth (cf. John 14:6). This is the intensified form, *epignōsis*, which has the connotation of experiential knowledge (cf. vv. 2,3,8; 2:20). The gospel is a person and He must be experienced, not just theologically defined.

▣ **“of Him who called us”** This VERB is used several times in Peter (I Pet. 1:15; 2:9,21; 3:9; 5:10; II Pet. 1:3). It always refers to a call from God. No person comes to God unless the Spirit draws him (cf. John 6:44,65; Eph. 1:4-5).

▣ **“by His own glory and excellence”** There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point.

1. Manuscripts P<sup>72</sup>, B, K, L, and most minuscules have *dia* (through) glory and virtue (cf. NKJV).
2. Manuscripts N, A, C, P, and most ancient translations have *idia* (His own) glory and virtue (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB).

The exegetical question is, “Are believers called (1) by means of deity’s (i.e., Father or Son) qualities or (2) to share these qualities?” The UBS<sup>4</sup> translation committee gives a “B” (almost certain) rating to option number 1.

**1:4 “For by these He has granted us”** This is a PERFECT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE matching the PARTICIPLE in v. 3. Deity’s divine power has given and continues to give believers all they need both initially (justification) and continually (sanctification) by means of His promises.



NASB	“precious and magnificent promises”
NKJV	“exceedingly great and precious promises”
NRSV	“precious and very great promises”
TEV	“the very great and precious gifts he promised”
NJB	“the greatest and precious promises”

These descriptive terms must refer to the gospel, whereby believers become partakers of the divine nature (i.e., the indwelling Holy Spirit). Fallen mankind’s hope is the steadfast and gracious character of God, expressed through His promises (i.e., both OT, but especially in Christ, cf. Heb. 6:17-18). The order of these two terms fluctuates in the Greek manuscripts.

The term “precious” was used in I Pet. 1:19 for the sacrificial blood of Christ. The term forms the root of the name “Timothy.”

▣ **“partakers of the divine nature”** This refers to (1) the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. v. 3), which comes at salvation or (2) another way of referring to the new birth (cf. I Pet. 1:3,23). This is so different from the Greek philosophical concept (although the terminology is from the Stoics) of the divine spark in all humans from creation. This does not mean we are gods or will ever be, but we are meant to be like Jesus (cf. I Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; John 3:2). Believers are to model the family characteristics of God (i.e., the image of God). The term “divine” used in both v. 3 and 4 is *theios*, which means “godly” or “god-like.”

▣ **“having escaped”** This word appears only in II Peter in the NT (cf. 1:4; 2:18,20). This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, implying a completed act (i.e., salvation, the time of receiving the gospel, cf. v. 1).

▣ **“the corruption that is in the world by lust”** The issue in II Peter is false teachers who were advocating a special secret knowledge (i.e., Gnosticism), but depreciating daily godly living (cf. I Pet. 1:14; 2:11; 4:3; II Pet. 2:10,18). Chapter one responds to this error in vv. 3-11!

Believers’ lives are evidence of (not the basis of) their true conversion (cf. James and I John). No fruit, no root (cf. Mark 4:1-20).

**1:5 “Now for this very reason”** This refers to believers’ response to God’s gifts and promises in vv. 3-4 (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues at I Pet. 4:3.



NASB	“applying all diligence. . .supply”
NKJV	“giving all diligence, add”
NRSV	“you must make every effort to support”
TEV	“do your best to add”
NJB	“do your utmost to support”

Literally this is “bringing all diligence, supply. . .” This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE and an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. God has wonderfully provided salvation (cf. vv. 3-4); now believers must walk in it (cf. vv. 5-7). The gospel is absolutely free from (1) the will of God; (2) the finished work of Christ; and (3) the wooing of the Spirit, but once received, becomes a cost-everything daily discipleship. This is the paradox of the gospel. It is a gift (cf. John 4:10; Rom. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Heb. 6:4), but also a covenant with privileges and responsibilities. The true gospel affects the mind, heart, and hand!

▣ **“faith”** This term may have several distinct connotations.

1. its OT background means “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness”
2. our accepting or receiving God’s free offer of forgiveness in Christ
3. faithful, godly living
4. the collective sense of the Christian faith or truth about Jesus (cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 3,20)

In this context (i.e., v. 1) it refers to receiving Christ as Savior. Now believers must grow and develop.

This expected Christian growth is also expressed in Rom. 5:3-4; James 1:3-4.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN GROWTH

### Romans 5:3-4

Tribulation Causes

- \* perseverance
- \* proven character
- \* hope (cf. v. 2)

### Galatians 5:22-23

Fruit of the Spirit

- \* love
- \* joy
- \* peace
- \*patience
- \* kindness
- \* goodness
- \* faithfulness
- \*gentleness
- \* self-control

### James 1:3-4

Testing Produces

- \* endurance
- \* maturity
- 1. steadfastness
- 2. complete

### II Peter 1:5-7

Applying Diligence

- \*moral excellence
- \* knowledge
- \* self-control
- \* perseverance
- \* godliness
- \* brotherly kindness  
(*philadelphia*)
- \* Christian love  
(*agapē*)

▣ **“moral excellence”** This quality was used of Christ (or God the Father) in v. 3. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). It is the antonym of “excess” (cf. 2:3,14). See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues in the NT at I Peter. 4:2.

▣ **“knowledge”** A knowledge (*gnōsis*) of the gospel that leads to Christlikeness is a wonderful thing. The false teachers were advocating a false knowledge that led to debauchery.

▣ **“self-control”** This virtue describes someone who is able to control the egocentric pull of the fallen sin nature (cf. Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:23; Titus 1:8). In some contexts (i.e., I Cor. 7:9) it alludes to inappropriate sexual activity and because of the antinomian tendencies of the false teachers, it may include that connotation here.

▣ **“perseverance”** This term refers to an active, voluntary, steadfast endurance. It is a God-like characteristic of patience with people and circumstances (cf. Rom. 5:3-4; James 1:3).

▣ **“godliness”** This is such an important term in the Pastoral Letters, as well as II Peter (see note at 1:3), that I want to quote from my commentary, volume 9, I Timothy 4:7:

“This is a pivotal term in the Pastoral Letters. It refers to the doctrinal and daily lifestyle implication of the gospel (cf. 3:16). It describes not the exceptional, but the expected. It is a compound term from ‘good’ (*eu*) and ‘worship’ (*sebomai*). True worship is daily living by means of proper thinking (cf. 4:16a). Notice the number of times this word is used in the Pastoral Letters:

1. NOUN (*eusebeia*), I Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11; II Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1
2. ADVERB (*eusebēs*), II Tim. 3:12; Titus 2:12
3. VERB (*eusebeō*), I Tim. 5:4
4. The related term *theosebeia*, I Tim. 2:10
5. The negated term (ALPHA PRIVATIVE, i.e., *asebeia*), II Tim. 2:16; Titus 2:12” (p. 53).

1:7

NASB, NKJV

“brotherly kindness, love”

NRSV

“mutual affection with love”

TEV

“Christian affection and love”

NJB

“kindness to brothers with love”

This is the compound Greek term *phileō* (i.e., love) and *adephos* (i.e., brother). It also occurs in I Pet. 1:22. In this context it refers to covenant brothers and sisters.

It is often said that *phileō* refers to a lesser love than *agapeō* (cf. v. 7), but in Koine Greek these terms are synonymous (cf. John 5:20, which uses *phileō* for the Father’s love for Jesus). However, here and in John 21 there may be an intended distinction.

**1:8 “for if”** This is not the usual form of a CONDITIONAL SENTENCE in Greek (cf. NJB, however, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* A. T. Robertson identifies this phrase as two PRESENT ACTIVE CIRCUMSTANTIAL [conditional] PARTICIPLES, cf. vol. 6, p. 151), but the stated evidence necessary for assurance which is based on a changed and changing life of repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance. Eternal life (i.e., the divine nature) has observable characteristics.

1. believers exhibit Christian qualities, vv. 5-7
2. believers have these qualities and they are increasing (both PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES), v. 8
3. believers are useful and fruitful to God, v. 8
4. believers live out the true knowledge of God (i.e., Christlikeness, cf. v. 8)

▣ **“neither useless nor unfruitful”** This is tragically all too often the spiritual state of believers.

1. useless or unproductive – James 2:20
2. unfruitful – Matt. 7:16-19; 13:22; Mark 4:19; Col. 1:10; Titus 3:14
3. Paul uses the word in the warning “do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness”

Beware of – no fruit, bad fruit! Eternal life has observable characteristics. No fruit – no root!

**1:9** As v. 8 describes the true Christian, v. 9 describes believers who are being influenced by the false teachers’ false dichotomy between knowledge–life, theology–ethics, orthodoxy–orthopraxy!

▣ **“short-sighted”** This is literally to “blink,” “wink,” or “squint.” It was used metaphorically of one who tries to see clearly, but is unable, possibly willfully turning from the light (cf. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* by James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, p. 420).

▣

NASB

“having forgotten his purification from his former sins”

NKJV

“has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins”

NRSV

“is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins”

TEV

“have forgotten that you have been purified from your past sins”

NJB

“forgetting how the sins of the past were washed away”

This implies that these are believers, but they have been lured back to a godless pagan lifestyle by the false teachers (cf. chapter 2). What a tragedy.

1. This lifestyle brings no joy, peace, or assurance
2. This lifestyle thwarts evangelism
3. This lifestyle destroys effective ministry
4. This lifestyle brings about an early death

In this phrase Peter is referring to the purification or cleansing from sin that occurs through Christ’s vicarious, substitutionary death on our behalf (cf. I Pet. 1:18; 2:24; 3:18).

**1:10 “be all the more diligent”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This term (cf. 1:15; 3:14) can mean

1. to do something quickly (cf. Titus 3:12)
2. to do one’s best (cf. Eph. 4:3)
3. to be eager (cf. Acts 20:16; Gal. 2:10)

Option #3 seems best (cf. NRSV).

▣

NASB

“to make certain”

NKJV

“to make. . .sure”

NRSV

“to confirm”

TEV

“to make. . .permanent”

NJB

“never allow. . .to waver”



This term is used in three ways.

1. certain by being well established (cf. Rom. 4:16)
  2. dependable (cf. II Pet. 2:19 and Heb. 3:14; 6:19)
  3. verifiable (used in koine Greek papyri from Egypt for legal guarantees such as validating a will)
- Christians can have assurance (cf. Phil. 2:12-13; I John 5:13). See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE**

- A. Can Christians know they are saved (cf. 5:13)? I John has three tests or evidences.
  1. Doctrinal (belief) (vv. 1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16; 5:11-12)
  2. Lifestyle (obedience) (vv. 2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:18)
  3. Social (love) (vv. 2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- B. Assurance has become a denominational issue
  1. John Calvin based assurance on God's election. He said that we can never be certain in this life.
  2. John Wesley based assurance on religious experience. He believed that we have the ability to live above known sin.
  3. Roman Catholics and the Church of Christ base assurance on an authoritative Church. The group to which one belongs is the key to assurance.
  4. Most evangelicals base assurance on the promises of the Bible, linked to the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).
- C. I think fallen mankind's primary assurance is linked to the character of the Triune God
  1. God the Father's love
    - a. John 3:16; 10:28-29
    - c. Romans 8:31-39
    - d. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
    - e. Philippians 1:6
    - f. I Peter 1:3-5
    - g. I John 4:7-21
  2. God the Son's actions
    - a. death on our behalf
      - 1) Acts 2:23
      - 2) Romans 5:6-11
      - 3) II Corinthians 5:21
      - 4) I John 2:2; 4:9-10
    - b. high priestly prayer (John 17:12)
    - c. continuing intercession
      - 1) Romans 8:34
      - 2) Hebrews 7:25
      - 3) I John 2:1
  3. God the Spirit's ministry
    - a. calling (John 6:44,65)
    - b. sealing
      - 1) II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5
      - 2) Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:3
    - c. assuring
      - 1) Romans 8:16-17
      - 2) I John 5:7-13
- D. But humans must respond to God's covenant offer (both initially and continually)
  1. believers must turn from sin (repentance) and to God through Jesus (faith)
    - a. Mark 1:15
    - b. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21

2. believers must receive God's offer in Christ
    - a. John 1:12; 3:16
    - b. Romans 5:1 (and by analogy 10:9-13)
    - c. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
  3. believers must continue in the faith
    - a. Mark 13:13
    - b. I Corinthians 15:2
    - c. Galatians 6:9
    - d. Hebrews 3:14
    - e. II Peter 1:10
    - f. Jude 20-21
    - g. Revelation 2:2-3,7,10,17,19,25-26; 3:5,10,11,21
  4. believers face three tests
    - a. doctrinal (vv. 1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16)
    - b. lifestyle (vv. 2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10)
    - c. social (vv. 2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- E. Assurance is difficult because
1. often believers seek certain experiences not promised in the Bible
  2. often believers do not fully understand the gospel
  3. often believers continue to willfully sin (cf. I Cor. 3:10-15; 9:27; I Tim. 1:19-20; II Tim. 4:10; II Pet. 1:8-11)
  4. certain personality types (i.e. perfectionists) can never accept God's unconditional acceptance and love
  5. in the Bible there are examples of false professions (cf. Matt. 13:3-23; 7:21-23; Mark 4:14-20; II Pet. 2:19-20; I John 2:18-19)

▣ **“His calling”** “His” is not in the Greek text, but is implied from 1:3. Believers’ ultimate hope is in the character of the Father, the work of the Son, and the wooing of the Spirit. However, these are confirmed in individual believers by their lives of faith, godliness, etc. (cf. vv. 5-7; Phil. 2:12-13). God deals with humanity in a covenant relationship. He sets the agenda, He initiates the encounter, He draws us to Himself, but we must initially and continually respond in repentance, faith, service, obedience, and perseverance. The gospel is a person to be welcomed, a truth to be believed, and a life to be lived! If any one is left out, mature, biblical salvation is impossible.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED**

God always takes the initiative in calling, electing, and wooing believers to Himself (cf. John 6:44, 65; 15:16; I Cor. 1:12; Eph. 1:4-5,11). The term “calling” is used in several theological senses:

- A. Sinners are called to salvation by the grace of God through the finished work of Christ and the conviction of the Spirit (i.e., *klētos*, cf. Rom. 1:6-7; 9:24, which is theologically similar to I Cor. 1:1-2 and II Tim. 1:9; II Pet. 1:10).
- B. Sinners call on the name of the Lord to be saved (i.e., *epikaleō*, cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This statement is a Jewish worship idiom.
- C. Believers are called to live Christlike lives (i.e., *klēsis*, cf. I Cor. 1:26; 7:20; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:14; II Thess. 1:11; II Tim. 1:9).
- D. Believers are called to ministry tasks (cf. Acts 13:2; I Cor. 12:4-7; Eph. 4:1).

▣ **“and choosing you”** The noun *eklogē* is always used of God's choice.

1. Jacob/Israel – Rom. 9:11
2. the faithful remnant – Rom. 11:5,28
3. NT believers – Rom. 11:7
4. the church – I Thess. 1:4; II Pet. 1:10

See Special Topics at Mark 13:20 and I Peter 1:2.

▣ **“as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble”** The “these things” refer to vv. 3-7. Eternal life has observable characteristics.

The grammar (i.e., a DOUBLE NEGATIVE) and the term *pote* (i.e., “at any time” or “ever”) give great assurance to struggling believers in the midst of suffering and persecution (i.e., I Peter) and false teachings (i.e., II Peter).

In *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 6, p. 153, A. T. Robertson identifies the VERB “practice” (i.e., *pioeō*) as a PRESENT ACTIVE CIRCUMSTANTIAL [conditional] PARTICIPLE, like v. 8. The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, and TEV include the English conditional “if” in their translations (like v. 8).

▣ **“you will never stumble”** This is a grammatical structure (DOUBLE NEGATIVES and the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD), which is the strongest way to negate a statement. This same truth is expressed in Jude 24.

However, like Hebrews (cf. 2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 5:11-6:12; 10:9-39; 12:14-29), II Peter has some shocking warnings (cf. 2:1,20-22; 3:17). Salvation is secure (cf. I Pet. 1:4-6), but must be maintained.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)**

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
  - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
  - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
  - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
  - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
  - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
  - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

### **I. Old Testament**

- A. Those who heard the twelve (ten) spies’ report, Numbers 14 (cf. Heb. 3:16-19)
- B. Korah, Numbers 16
- C. Eli’s sons, I Samuel 2, 4
- D. Saul, I Samuel 11-31
- E. False prophets (examples)
  1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22 (ways to know a false prophet)
  2. Jeremiah 28
  3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- F. False prophetesses
  1. Ezekiel 13:17
  2. Nehemiah 6:14

G. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)

1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:13-23
4. Those spoken of in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8
5. The Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
7. Those of I Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
10. False teachers, II Peter 2:19-22; Jude vv. 12-19
11. antichrists, I John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. I Corinthians 3:10-15
2. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

**1:11 “eternal kingdom”** This refers to the eternal reign of YHWH and the Messiah (cf. Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:14,27; Luke 1:33; I Tim. 6:16; Rev. 11:15, 22:5). This does not refer to a millennial kingdom nor does any other NT text, except Rev. 20, although some see a veiled allusion in I Cor. 15:25-28. I do not.

▣ **“Lord and Savior”** This same phrase was used of the Emperor. It is a rare title used often in this book (cf. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2,18).

▣ **“will be abundantly supplied to you”** This is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The IMPERATIVE form was used in 1:5. God will provide all believers' needs (cf. 1:3). Believers are commanded to respond appropriately in light of God's provision (cf. 1:4). Their response was not the way to be accepted by God, but the evidence that they have been accepted.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-15**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. <sup>13</sup>I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup>knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. <sup>15</sup>And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

**1:12 “Therefore”** Based on the gospel truths of chapter 1.

▣ **“I will always be ready to remind you”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. 1:12-13,15; 3:1-2; Phil. 3:1; Jude 5,17). These truths of the gospel need to be repeated again and again for the information of the new believers and the steadfastness of the mature believers.

Verses 12-15 are often identified as a genre called “testimonies.” Usually it is related to a person's last words before death (cf. Josh. 23-24; I Sam. 12; II Tim. 4:6-8; II Pet. 1:12-15).

▣ **“having been established”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This may refer to (1) the preaching of the gospel or (2) miraculous manifestations. Notice it is God's power (PASSIVE VOICE) that gives the believer stability (cf. I Pet. 5:10). But believers must guard it (cf. 3:17; I Pet. 5:9).

▣ **“in the truth”** The terms “truth/true/trustworthy” are such important biblical concepts that I would like to share with you two special topics taken from my commentary on John's writings (Vol. 4).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: “TRUTH” (THE CONCEPT) IN JOHN’S WRITINGS**

In a sense John combines the Hebrew background and Greek background of *alētheia* “truth” as he did *logos* (cf. 1:1-14). In Hebrew *emeth* (BDB 53) denotes that which is true, or trustworthy (often associated in the Septuagint with *pisteuō*). In Greek it was associated with Plato's reality versus unreality, heavenly versus earthly. This fits the dualism of John. God has clearly revealed (the etymology of *alētheia* is to expose, unconceal, clearly manifest) Himself in His Son. This is expressed in several ways.

1. NOUN, *alētheia*, truth
  - a. Jesus is full of grace and truth (cf. 1:14,17 – OT covenant terms)
  - b. Jesus is the focus of John the Baptist's witness (cf. 4:33; 18:37 – last OT prophet)
  - c. Jesus speaks the truth (cf. 8:4,44,45,46 – revelation is propositional and personal)
  - d. Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life (cf. 14:6)
  - e. Jesus (the *Logos*, 1:1-3) is truth (cf. 17:17)
2. ADJECTIVE, *alēthēs*, true, trustworthy
  - a. Jesus' witness (cf. 5:31-32; 7:18; 8:13-14)
  - b. Jesus' judgment (cf. 8:16)
3. ADJECTIVE, *alēthinus*, real
  - a. Jesus is the true light (cf. 1:9)
  - b. Jesus is the true bread (cf. 6:32)
  - c. Jesus is the true vine (cf. 15:1)
  - d. Jesus is the true witness (cf. 19:35)
4. ADVERB, *alēthōs*, truly
  - a. Samaritan witness to Jesus as Savior of the world (cf. 4:42)
  - b. Jesus is true food and drink, as opposed to the manna of Moses' day (cf. 6:55)

The term truth and its derivatives also express others' testimony to Jesus, *alēthēs*

- a. John the Baptist's testimony is true (cf. 10:41)
- b. testimony of one of the soldiers at the crucifixion is true (cf. 19:35)
- c. John's (the author of the Gospel) testimony is true (cf. 21:24)
- d. Jesus seen as true prophet (cf. 6:14; 7:40)

For a good discussion of truth in the OT and NT see George E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 263-269.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: “TRUE” (THE TERM) IN JOHN’S WRITINGS

1. God the Father
  - a. God is true/trustworthy (cf. John 3:33; 7:18,28; 8:26; 17:3; Rom. 3:4; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:20; Rev. 6:10)
  - b. God’s ways are true (cf. Rev. 15:3)
  - c. God’s judgments are true (cf. Rev. 16:7; 19:2)
  - d. God’s sayings are true (cf. Rev. 19:11)
2. God the Son
  - a. the Son is true/truth
    - 1) true light (cf. John 1:9; I John 2:8)
    - 2) true vine (cf. John 15:1)
    - 3) full of grace and truth (cf. John 1:14,17)
    - 4) He is truth (cf. John 14:6; 8:32)
    - 5) He is true (cf. Rev. 3:7,14; 19:11)
  - b. the Son’s testimony/witness is true (cf. John 18:37)
3. It can have a comparative sense
  - a. the law of Moses versus Jesus’ grace and truth (cf. John 1:17)
  - b. the tabernacle in the wilderness versus the heavenly tabernacle (cf. Heb. 8:2; 9:1)
4. As so often in John this word had several connotations (Hebraic and Greek). John uses them all to describe the Father and the Son, as persons, as speakers, and as their message which is to be passed on to their followers (cf. John 4:13; 19:35; Heb. 10:22; Rev. 22:6).
5. For John these two adjectives describe the Father as the one and only trustworthy deity (cf. 5:44; I John 5:20) and Jesus as His true and complete revelation for the purpose of redemptive, not just cognitive, facts!



NASB	“which is present with you”
NKJV	“in the present truth”
NRSV	“that has come to you”
TEV	“you have received”
NJB	(phrase omitted)

Literally the phrase is “in the present truth.” How is the “truth” present? The truth is both (1) the trustworthiness of God’s character and word and (2) a description of Jesus and a way of referring to the gospel message (i.e., the Living Word and the Written Word).

The term “present” is the term *parousē*, used to describe the Second Coming of Christ as His “presence” (cf. 1:16; 3:4,12).

**1:13 “earthly dwelling”** Paul also uses this phrase in II Cor. 5:1-10 to refer to his physical body. Verses 14 and 15 clearly show that Peter expected to be martyred soon.

**1:14 “our Lord Jesus Christ”** This title would have implied several theological truths to a first century Jewish/Christian readership.

▣ **“Lord”** The Greek term Lord (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a developed theological sense. It can mean “mister,” “sir” (cf. John 4:11), “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “the full God-man” (cf. John 9:36,38). The OT (Hebrew, *adon*) usage of this term came from the Jews’ reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Mark 12:36. They were afraid of breaking the commandment, which said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word *kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase “Jesus is Lord” was the public confession of faith and a baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

▣ **“Jesus”** This Hebrew name meant “YHWH saves” or “YHWH brings salvation.” It was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *hosea*, suffixed to the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua.

▣ **“Christ”** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *messiah*, which meant “an anointed one.” It implies “one called and equipped by God for a specific task.” In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

▣ **“has made clear to me”** This may refer to Peter’s death (cf. John 13:36) or the manner of Peter’s death which is revealed by the Lord to Peter in John 21:18-19.

**1:15 “after my departure”** This is the term “exodus” (cf. Luke 9:31) used in the sense of death (i.e., a euphemism) or return to heaven.

▣ **“you will be able to call these things to mind”** This could refer to the book of I Peter, II Peter, or the Gospel Mark (cf. Irenaeus). Peter realized that the Spirit would use his writings after his death. He must have had a sense that the Spirit was speaking through him for Christians to read and use after his death!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" <sup>18</sup>and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**

**1:16**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“cleverly devised tales”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“cunningly devised fables”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“cleverly devised myths”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“made-up stories”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“cleverly invented myths”</b>

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which implies a permanent state of delusion (PERFECT TENSE) brought on by an unidentified, outside agent (PASSIVE VOICE) which could be the false teachers themselves or the evil one. We get the English word “myth” from this Greek word, which is found only in

1. I Tim. 1:4; 4:7
2. II Tim. 4:4
3. Titus 3:9,14
4. II Pet. 1:16

Since these false teachers (from the description of chapter 2) were incipient Gnostics with some Jewish tendencies (i.e., #2), these myths could refer to

1. angelic levels between a holy god and lesser spiritual beings (aeons) and their secret names
2. genealogies related to the Messiah as the heavenly man distinct from a truly human Christ
3. the purposeful theological separation of salvation and ethics/morality

For a good discussion of the different ways “myth” is used, see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, chapters 12-13, pp. 201-243.

▣ **“coming of our Lord”** This is another central theme of the book. The term *parousia*, defined as “coming” or “presence” (same root in v. 12), is used in the koine Greek papyri for a royal visit of a king. The term *parousia* usually refers to the Second Coming (cf. 3:4,12), but it can refer to the Incarnation. It may refer to that here because of the contextual allusion to the Transfiguration in the next phrase.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SECOND COMING**

This is literally “until the *parousia*,” which means “presence,” and was used of a royal visit. The other NT terms used for the Second Coming are (1) *epiphaneia*, “face to face appearing”; (2) *apokalypis*, “unveiling”; and (3) “the Day of the Lord” and the variations of this phrase.

The NT as a whole is written within the world-view of the OT, which asserted

1. a current evil, rebellious age
2. a coming new age of righteousness
3. this would be brought about by the Spirit’s agency through the work of the Messiah (Anointed One)

The theological assumption of progressive revelation is required because the NT authors slightly modify Israel’s expectation. Instead of a military, nationalistic-focused (Israel) coming of the Messiah, there are two comings. The first coming was the incarnation of deity in the conception and birth of Jesus of Nazareth. He came as the non-military, non-judicial “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53; also the mild rider on the colt of a donkey (not a war horse or kingly mule), of Zech. 9:9. The first coming inaugurated the New Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God on earth. In one sense the Kingdom is here, but of course, in another it is still far off. It is this tension between the two comings of the Messiah which, in a sense, is the over-lapping of the two Jewish

ages that was unseen, or at least unclear, from the OT. In reality, this dual coming emphasizes YHWH's commitment to redeem all humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5 and the preaching of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jonah).

The church is not waiting for the fulfillment of OT prophecy because most prophecies refer to the first coming (cf. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 165-166). What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The OT presentations were not inaccurate, but incomplete. He will come again just as the prophets predicted, in the power and authority of YHWH.

The Second Coming is not a biblical term, but the concept forms the world-view and framework of the entire NT. God will set it all straight. Fellowship between God and mankind made in His image will be restored. Evil will be judged and removed. God's purposes will not, cannot, fail!

▣ **“we were eyewitnesses of His majesty”** This asserts Peter's authorship by being an eyewitness of Jesus' earthly life. This specifically refers to the Transfiguration (cf. v. 18 and Mark 9:2-8). This phrase was also used of initiates into the mystery religions experiencing oneness with a god. Peter, like Paul, often used his opponent's phrases as a means of refuting them or giving their proper meaning.

Jesus is described by the term “majesty.” In the next verse (v. 17) God the Father is identified by the same term “Majestic Glory.” The essence of deity within Jesus was unveiled to the inner circle of disciples (i.e., Peter, James, and John) on the mountain.

▣ **1:17 “honor and glory”** This is a possible reference to the “*Shekinah* Glory” (what the rabbis call the cloud in Exodus and Numbers), the cloud out of which God spoke (cf. Mark 9:2-8). See Special Topic: Glory at I Peter 1:21.

▣ **“Father”** See Special Topic at Mark 13:32.

▣ **“an utterance”** The rabbis call this a *Bath Kol* (i.e., a voice out of heaven), which was a confirmation of God's will during the time from Malachi to John the Baptist in which there was no prophetic voice. The Father affirmed Jesus both at His baptism and His Transfiguration (cf. Mark 1:11; Matt. 17:5-6).

▣ **“My beloved Son”** This is a Messianic title from Ps. 2:7.

▣ **“with whom I am well-pleased”** This is an allusion to Isa. 42:1 (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). By linking Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42, Peter emphasizes both the royal and suffering servant aspects of the Messiah. These two aspects also define His two comings: Incarnation = Suffering Servant; Second Coming = King and Judge!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:19-21**

<sup>19</sup>So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

**1:19 “the prophetic word”** This refers to either (1) OT texts (i.e., v. 17) or (2) NT Apostolic witness (cf. v. 12; I John 1:1-5).

▣ **“made more sure”** God's OT revelation is confirmed in the NT revelation. The OT is surely crucial to a full understanding of the NT (cf. Mark 1:1-3).

This whole paragraph is related to the delayed Second Coming, which some began to doubt. Peter wants to assure his readers by

1. his own experience of the new age (i.e., Jesus' transfiguration)
2. the fulfillment of prophecy in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus

The new day had arrived and will be consummated (i.e., as a lamp shining, as Venus rising). See. F. F. Bruce, *answers to Questions*, p. 130.

▣ **“a lamp shining in a dark place”** This is an allusion to Ps. 119:105 and possibly Pro. 6:23. God has provided fallen humanity all the information they need to respond to Him by faith (i.e., revelation, inspiration, and illumination). God's self-revelation through the OT and supremely through Christ, which is recorded and explained by NT authors, is fully adequate (although not exhaustive). This revelation (OT and NT) is like a light shining in the darkness of human and angelic sin and rebellion. But one day the far better brighter light (i.e., a face-to-face encounter with Christ) will illuminate every believer's heart and mind. The goal of revelation is not information, but salvation (i.e., restored, intimate fellowship).



The false teachers claimed to have a special revelation from deity, but Peter affirms that Jesus is God's full and complete self-revelation.

▣ **“the morning star”** This is literally “light bearer” or “daystar” (cf. Rev. 2:28; 22:16). From this Greek term we get the English word “phosphorus.” This aspect of a light shining has several OT connotations.

1. It is related to the Hebrew term *helel*, translated “morning star” (Lucifer in Latin, cf. Isa. 14:12), usually referring to the planet Venus.
2. It relates to the coming Messiah in Num. 24:17 (i.e., “a star shall come forth from Jacob”) and Mal. 4:2 (i.e., “The sun of righteousness will rise”).
3. It relates to resurrected saints in Dan. 12:3 (i.e., “will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven”).
4. It relates to the royal incarnated Messiah in Rev. 22:16 (i.e., “the offspring of David the bright morning star”).

▣ **“rises in your hearts”** In context this refers to the existential encounter with God brought about by His own self-revelation in Scripture (OT), Jesus (incarnation), and Apostolic writings (NT). At some point fallen humans have an “aha” moment of understanding. God's truth breaks into our consciousness. This process of understanding and conviction is guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65).

Christianity begins as an individual's encounter and faith response to God in Christ. It issues in a corporate experience of family love and family service (cf. I Cor. 12:7). See Special Topic: Heart at mark 2:6.

**1:20 “Scripture”** This is one of several verses in the NT that speak of God's self-revelation in OT and NT writings (i.e., Scripture).

1. Matthew 5:17-19
2. I Corinthians 2:9-13
3. I Thessalonians 2:13
4. II Timothy 3:16
5. I Peter 1:23-25
6. II Peter 1:20-21
7. II Peter 3:15-16

The essence of all of these is that Scripture is from God and of God, not human in origin. God inspired the writers (cf. II Pet. 1:20-21) and their writings (cf. II Tim. 3:16).

▣ **“a matter of one's own interpretation”** This phrase surely expresses the existing tension caused by the false teachers in the churches. It is possible that they were quoting Scripture and then putting their own spin on it (which is also common today).

In context it is difficult to know whether this phrase refers to (1) the OT writers or (2) the contemporary false teachers. If the first option, it speaks to the theological concept of inspiration (cf. II Tim. 3:16). The following verse seems to confirm this interpretation. If the second option, it speaks of the theological concept of illumination (i.e., that the Spirit guides believers in interpreting the Bible).

It must be stated that the evangelical concept of “the priesthood of the believer” is usually understood as the Spirit-given ability to interpret the Bible for oneself. However, biblically, the phrase refers to the church as the agent of accomplishing the Great Commission, cf. I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6. Notice in the OT (cf. Exod. 19:6) and the NT the phrase “the priesthood of believers” is PLURAL (i.e., corporate), not individual.

**1:21 “men moved by the Holy Spirit”** This is literally “carried,” which is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This adds emphasis to the truth that the Bible is God's message, not a human message! It is true that the Bible is in human words, but humans were uniquely guided by the Spirit. The Bible is not exhaustive truth, for no human can comprehend that level of reality, but it is trustworthy, adequate truth about God, about sin, about salvation, about godly living, and about eternity.

The exact method of inspiration varies.

- |                  |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. theophanies   | 2. Urim and Thummin/lots              |
| 3. dreams        | 4. visions                            |
| 5. trances       | 6. angels                             |
| 7. symbolic acts | 8. special events and interpretations |

The questions remain (1) does God give the content and the human author the form or (2) does God give both?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is the Christian life primarily God's doing or ours?
2. What part do humans play in their relationship to God?
3. Can Christian living be separated from salvation?
4. Is salvation conditional?
5. What false teaching was Peter confronting in this letter?
6. What is the significance of the Father's words in v. 19?
7. What do verses 20-21 say about the Bible?

## II PETER 2

### PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
False Prophets and Teachers	Destructive Doctrines	Attack Upon False Teachers	False Teachers	False Teachers
2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3
	Doom of False Teachers			Lessons of the Past
2:4-10a	2:4-11	2:4-10a	2:4-10a	2:4-10a
				The Punishment to Come
2:10b-16	Depravity of False Teachers	2:10b-16	2:10b-16	2:10b-12
	2:12-17			2:13-16
2:17-22	Deceptions of False Teachers	2:17-22	2:17-22	2:17-22
	2:18-22			

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO II PETER 2:1-22

- A. This section parallels the book of Jude. There has been literary borrowing, but it is not obvious who borrowed from whom. It is possible Jude is alluding to Peter's prophecy because after his death, it has come true (NET Bible).
- B. These false teachers seem to be antinomian, incipient Gnostics with a highly developed angelology (which may reflect a Persian influence; cf. I Tim. 6:3-5). All of the OT accounts mentioned involve angels in some way.
- C. Peter pulls from the common knowledge of his day (OT accounts; I Enoch; pagan sources).
- D. The Bible is very ambiguous as to the origin, the fall and the activities of the angelic world. Don't let your curiosity go beyond God-given information (i.e., modern novels).
- E. There is an extended list of characteristics of the false teachers
  1. secretly introducing destructive heresies (v. 1)
  2. denying the Master (v. 1)
  3. following sensuality (v. 2)

4. being greedy (v. 3)
5. despising authority (v. 10)
6. acting like animals (v. 12)
7. seeking pleasure (v. 13)
8. subverting the Christian love feasts (v. 13)
9. causing weak believers to sin (v. 14)
10. promising freedom, but they are slaves (v. 19).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3

<sup>1</sup>But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; <sup>3</sup>and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

**2:1 “false prophets”** True prophets are discussed in 1:19-21. The OT mentions false prophets often (cf. Deut. 13:1-5, 18:19-22; I Kings 18:19, 22:6ff; Jer. 5:3, 23:9-18), as does the NT (cf. Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; II Pet. 2:1; I John 4:1; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). See Special Topic: Apostasy at II Peter 1:10.

▣ **“also arose among the people”** This refers to the OT people of God. Notice the parallelism between the first two clauses (repeat “among”). Notice the false prophets came from among the people of God, and not from the outside.

▣ **“false teachers”** The clues in chapter 2 show that these were incipient Gnostics. See Special Topic: Gnostics at I Pet. 3:22.

▣ **“secretly introduce”** This compound of *para* and *eisagō* has the connotation of “to sneak in alongside” (cf. Gal. 2:4 and Jude verse 4).

▣ **“destructive heresies”** The term “heresies” (divisions) is used in three ways in the NT.

1. as a religious sect or group (cf. Acts 24:14; 26:5)
2. as divisions within Christianity (cf. I Cor. 11:19)
3. as the teachings that are contrary to orthodoxy

They are usually a mixture of truth and error. Often, they magnify some truth to the exclusion of other biblical truths or a perversion related to Christology. Heresy always comes from within the Christian fellowship (cf. Matt. 7:15-23, 24:24; I Tim. 4:1-5; I John 2:18-25). A description of their actions can be seen in (1) Contextual Insights E. and (2) Gal. 5:19.

▣ **“even denying the Master”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE, which speaks of ongoing personal rejection of Christ by the false teachers. This refers either to denial of Jesus (1) by theology or (2) lifestyle (cf. Jude 4). This is the first of four descriptive phrases (vv. 1-3) about false teachers denying the Master by

1. their actions and beliefs
2. their immoral ways
3. their greed
4. their self-deception

The title “master” is the term *despotēs*, which means “lord” or “master.” It is used of slave owners (cf. I Tim. 6:1,2; Titus 2:9; I Pet. 2:18).

It is interesting to note that the term “master” is normally used for God the Father (cf. Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24 [quoting the LXX of Exod. 20:11 or Ps. 146:6]). However, it is also used of Christ (cf. II Tim. 2:21; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10). Here is another title of the Father transferred to the Son to assert His Deity.

▣ **“who bought them”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This seems, like vv. 20-22, to imply that they were once saved, but not now! This is a reference to (1) YHWH’s saving His people in the OT or (2) Christ’s redemptive work in the NT (cf. Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:20; Eph. 1:7; I Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; I Pet. 1:19; I John 2:2; Rev. 5:9). In the OT to buy someone back from slavery (i.e., ransom or redeem) referred to physical deliverance. Usually in the NT it refers to salvation. In the OT to sell someone into the hands of their enemies referred to judgment.

The NJB has the interesting translation “who bought them freedom.” Apparently they see the context (vv. 2-3) as relating to believers who live godless lives and bring reproach on Christ and Christianity. This then would refer to believers who die early because of their godless living and destructive influence.

▣ **“bringing swift destruction upon themselves”** No first century believer would have asked this question, but modern believers think about it a lot, especially related to how their group views assurance! Some link the phrase to “YHWH” or “the people,” which would then refer to Exodus (i.e., Wilderness Wanderings).

The real question is, “Were the heretics truly saved?” I believe that biblical doctrines are given in dialectical or paradoxical pairs, which is characteristic of Eastern literature. Modern western readers and interpreters tend to propositionalize and decontextualize verses. I surely affirm the security of the believer, but am more and more uncomfortable with “once saved, always saved” because of passages like this. Security is evidenced by (not based on) godly living (cf. James and I John). Believers struggle and sin, but they continue to trust in Christ and respond (sometimes slowly) to the correcting of the Holy Spirit.

However, the Parable of the Soils (cf. Matthew 13) and the active, but lost, religionists of Matt. 7:15-27, assure me that there do exist false professions of faith (cf. vv. 20-22; I John 2:18-19).

False teachers have caused and still cause great turmoil in the church. In I John there are several tests for true believers.

1. willingness to confess sin (1:5; 2:22)
2. lifestyle obedience (2:3-6)
3. lifestyle love (2:7-11)
4. victory over evil (2:12-14)
5. forsaking the world (2:15-17)
6. perseverance (2:19)
7. doctrine (2:20-24)

Peter also lists the inappropriate actions of these false teachers (see Contextual Insights, E). If it is true that the gospel is a (1) person; (2) a message about that person; and (3) a lifestyle emulating that person, then these false teachers violated all three.

Can someone be “bought” by Jesus and deny Jesus? This is the problem. Salvation is free and for all who will respond in repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. But, maturity is a cost-everything discipleship. We must hold tightly to both of these biblical truths. Doctrine comes in tension-filled pairs because Christianity is not only a biblical theology (cf. Rom. 6), but a daily struggle (cf. Romans 7) for godliness. Salvation is a relationship, not an isolated decision!

**2:2 “Many will follow”** Oh, the tragedy of leading others astray (cf. Matt. 18:6-7). Peter uses this compound term often (cf. 1:16; 2:2,15,21; Matt. 18:6).



NASB	“their sensuality”
NKJV	“their destructive ways”
NRSV	“their licentious ways”
TEV	“their immoral ways”
NJB	“their debauched behavior”

The term *aselgeia* can be translated “licentiousness,” “debauchers,” or “sensuality,” implying out-of-bounds sexual activity (cf. 2:2,7,18; I Pet. 4:3; Jude 4). It is often included in the lists of sins of pagan society (cf. Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19).

▣ **“because of them the way of truth will be maligned”** It is crucial how believers live. They are to reflect the family characteristics of God (i.e., faith in Jesus restores the image of God in mankind, cf. I Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:5).

▣ **“the way of truth”** “The Way” was the early name used for Christians (cf. Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22). It reflects the OT concept of biblical faith as a clearly marked path that we must follow (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23). This phrase refers to the gospel message. Obviously a godly lifestyle is an integral aspect of salvation (Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

▣ **“will be maligned”** Pagans misunderstood believers and accused them of immoral practices. The lives of these false teachers added to these misconceptions.

**2:3 “in their greed”** This term has a negative connotation in both the Septuagint and the NT. False teachers are characterized by desire for more and more at any cost (cf. 2:14; Micah 3:11; I Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; Jude 16). This term is used often in the NT (cf. Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; Rom. 1:29; II Cor. 9:5; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; I Thess. 2:5; II Pet. 2:3,14) because it characterizes the self-centered nature of fallen humanity. This can refer to financial greed, sexual greed, or places of honor (i.e., teachers) within the churches.

▣ **“they will exploit you”** The King James Version has “make merchandise of you.” We get the English word “emporium” from this Greek word.



NASB	“with false words”
NKJV, NRSV	“deceptive words”
NJB	“untrue tales”

The ADJECTIVE denotes that which is molded or made (cf. Rom. 9:20). We get the English word “plastic” from this Greek term. The false teachers caused problems within the believing community and in society. Their lives brought reproach on the gospel and their lies perverted the gospel message.

▣ **“their judgment”** There have always been false teachers among the people of God. They were condemned in the OT (cf. Deut. 13:1-5,6-11,12-18). Their temporal, as well as eschatological, judgment is sure and not delayed (cf. Gal. 6:7). In this text both “judgment” and “destruction” are personified.

This is a spiritual principle. God is ethical-moral and so is His creation. Humans break themselves on God’s standards. We reap what we sow. This is true for believers (but does not affect salvation) and unbelievers (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-10a**

**<sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; <sup>7</sup>and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men <sup>8</sup>(for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds), <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup>and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.**

**2:4 “if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL which is usually assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. This begins an extended sentence which runs through verse 10a. It is possible that this conditional pattern is to be repeated through this long, involved Greek sentence. The NRSV has an “if” in vv. 4,5,6,7; NIV has an “if” in vv. 4,5,6,7,9, but it only occurs in the Greek text in v. 4. This context delineates a series of OT judgments involving angels.

▣ **“angels when they sinned”** This is parallel to Jude v. 6. The following are the notes from my commentary on James and Jude (Vol. 11).

### **Notes from Jude Commentary**

**Jude v. 6 “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day”** Sodom and Gomorrah, in the same way as these angels, indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh. Both are exhibited as examples undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

**Jude v. 6 “and angels”** This verse adds angels to his lists of those who initially worshiped and later rebelled against YHWH and were thus destroyed or judged. But which angels? Some information is given to describe this particular group of angels:

1. they did not keep their own domain
2. they abandoned their proper abode
3. they will be kept in eternal bonds under darkness for judgment day
4. “sinned” (II Pet. 2:4)
5. “committed them into *Tartarus*” (II Pet. 2:4)
6. “committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment” (II Pet. 2:4)

Which angels in the OT rebelled and sinned?

1. angels as powers behind pagan worship
2. the lesser angelic beings, called by specific demonic names in the OT. Examples: Lilith (cf. Isa. 34:14), Azazel (cf. Lev. 16:8), and goat demons (cf. Lev. 17:7)
3. the “sons of God” in Gen. 6 (often discussed in intertestamental apocalyptic writings, I Enoch 86-88; 106; II Enoch 7,18; II Baruch 56; Jubilees 5)
4. angels mentioned in an example from a Jewish apocalyptic intertestamental writing (because of Jude’s use of other books of this kind in vv. 9 and 14)



NASB	“who did not keep their own domain”
NKJV	“who did not keep their proper domain”
NRSV	“who did not keep their own position”
TEV	“who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority”
NJB	“who did not keep to the authority they had”

There is a play on the tense of the VERB “keep” in v. 6. The angels did not keep their place (AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) so God has kept them in a place of imprisonment until judgment day (PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE). Those angels who violated God’s will faced both temporal and eschatological judgment, just as the rebels of Israel during the wilderness wandering period and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The term “domain” is the Greek term *archē*, which means the “beginning” or “origin” of something.

1. beginning of the created order (cf. John 1:1; I John 1:1)
2. the beginning of the gospel (cf. Mark 1:1; Phil. 4:15)
3. first eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:2)
4. beginning signs (miracles, cf. John 2:11)
5. beginning principles (cf. Heb. 5:12)
6. beginning assurance/confidence (cf. Heb. 3:14)

It came to be used of “rule” or “authority”

1. of human governing officials
  - a. Luke 12:11
  - b. Luke 20:20
  - c. Romans 13:3; Titus 3:1
2. of angelic authorities
  - a. Romans 8:38
  - b. I Cor. 15:24
  - c. Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:10
  - d. Col. 1:16; 2:10,15

These false teachers despise all authority, earthly and heavenly. They are antinomian libertines. They put themselves and their desires first before God, angels, civil authorities, and church leaders.



**NASB** “but abandoned their proper abode”  
**NKJV** “but left their own habitation”  
**NRSV** “but left their proper dwelling”  
**TEV** “but abandoned their own dwelling place”  
**NJB** “but left their appointed sphere”

These angels left their heavenly domain and went to another (earth). This fits the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 very well. This act was a willful rejection of God’s will and authority.

▣ **“in eternal bonds”** Chains are used on angels in I Enoch and Satan is bound with a “great chain” in Rev. 20:1-2. The term “eternal” may mean “powerful,” “adequate,” “sure,” not literally eternal, because these angels are only held until Judgment Day, when other means of incarceration shall be used (cf. Rev. 20:10,14-15). The point is, some angels are imprisoned now, so as to control their evil activities.

▣ **“under darkness”** The term *Tartarus* (not used in Jude but present in II Pet. 2:4 and I Enoch 20:2) was used in Greek mythology for the holding place of the Titans, the half divine, half human giants. This fits the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6. I Enoch describes the new abode of these rebellious angels (cf. I Enoch 10:5,12) as eternal darkness. How different from heavenly brilliance (glory). The rabbis divided *Sheol* into “Paradise” (for the righteous) and *Tartarus* (for the wicked). The term “abyss” (cf. Luke 8:3, Rev. 9:1; 11:7; 20:3) is synonymous with the metaphors of darkness used in verse 13b.

▣ **“the great day”** This is another way of referring to Judgment Day, the day when God will hold all conscious creation responsible for the gift of life (cf. Phil. 2:10-11; Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:10-12).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: “the sons of God” in Genesis 6

- A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase “the sons of God.” There have been three major interpretations
  3. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Genesis 5)
  2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings
  3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants of Cain’s line (cf. Genesis 4)
- B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth’s line
  1. the immediate literary context of Genesis 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the godly line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth.

2. the rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
  3. the phrase, “the sons of God,” though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings
    - a. Deut. 32:5
    - b. Psalm 73:15; 82:1-4
    - c. Hosea 1:10
- C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings
1. this has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God’s will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy)
  2. the phrase (“sons of God”) is used overwhelmingly in the OT for angels
    - a. Job 1:6
    - b. Job 2:1
    - c. Job 38:7
    - d. Daniel 3:25
    - e. Psalm 29:1
    - f. Psalm 89:6,7
  3. the intertestamental book of I Enoch, which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls and *Jubilees* 5:1, interprets these as rebellious angels (I Enoch 12:4; 19:1; 21:1-10).
  4. the immediate context of Genesis 6 seems to imply that “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation
  5. I Enoch even asserts that Noah’s Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff)
- D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants of Cain’s line
1. there are several ancient translations that support this view
    - a. Targum or Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates “sons of God” as “sons of nobles”
    - b. Symmachus (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated “sons of God” as “the sons of the kings”
    - c. the term *elohim* is sometimes used of Israelite leaders (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 82:1,6)
    - d. *Nephilim* is linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4. *Gibborim* is plural of *Gibbor* meaning “a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power”
  2. this interpretation and its evidence is taken from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 106-108.
- E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages
1. the phrase refers to Sethites
 

a. Cyril of Alexander	e. Calvin
b. Theodoret	f. Kyle
c. Augustine	g. Gleason Archer
d. Jerome	h. Watts
  2. the phrase refers to angelic beings
 

a. writers of the Septuagint	f. Tertullian	k. Olford
b. Philo	g. Origen	l. Westermann
c. Josephus ( <i>Antiquities</i> 1.3.1)	h. Luther	m. Wenham
d. Justin Martyr	i. Delitzsch	n. NET bible
e. Clement of Alexandria	j. Hengstenberg	
- F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2?
1. They are the giants that resulted from the union between angels and human women (cf. Num. 13:33).
  2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.



3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”

This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

- G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses’ first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the phrase “sons of God” is used consistently, if not exclusively, for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) “sons of God” as “angels of God”
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. II Peter 2 and Jude speak of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode

I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth, but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).

5. I think that one reason many of the events of Genesis 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e., similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women) is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel’s dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible

(II Peter 2) for the holding place of the angels that kept not their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).



NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV, TEV,  
NIV “Hell”  
NJB “the underworld”  
Weymouth “Tartarus”

See note above on “under darkness” in notes on Jude v. 6.

▣ “pits of darkness” The term *sirois* is found in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts N, A, B, and C. The King James Version has “chains” (*seirais*), which is similar in meaning to the word “bonds” (*demois*) in Jude 6, which is found in the ancient papyri manuscript P<sup>72</sup>, also compare I Enoch 10:12, ).

**2:5 “and did not spare the ancient world”** This refers to God’s judgment on the wickedness of mankind (cf. Gen. 6:5, 11-12, 13; 8:21b). This judgment by water is described in Gen. 6-9. This same event is mentioned in I Pet. 3:18-22.

▣ “Noah” One man and his family “found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (i.e., Noah, cf. Gen. 6:8-9, 18). This event is also described in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.3.1; I Clement 7.6, 9.4; and the Sibylline Oracles 1.128).

▣ “a preacher of righteousness” The OT does not mention Noah’s preaching, but rabbinical tradition surely does (cf. Jubilee 7:20-29; Sibylline Oracles 1.128-129).

▣ “a flood” From this Greek word comes the English word “cataclysm.” According to I Enoch, this was God’s judgment on the mixed races of the human/angelic sexual relationships of Gen. 6:1-4.

**2:6 “Sodom and Gomorrah”** The destruction of these wicked cities is described in Gen. 19:24-28. Angels were the means of escape for Lot and his family and, by implication, they were involved in the destruction of these cities of the plain.

This is parallel to Jude v. 7. It seems that Noah is an example of judgment by water and Sodom and Gomorrah an example of judgment by fire.

I have included the following notes from my commentary on Jude v. 7

## Notes from Jude Commentary

**v. 7 “Sodom and Gomorrah”** This is the third example of rebellion that involved sexual activities outside of God’s revealed plan of marriage:

1. the Canaanite fertility worship at Shittim (cf. Numbers 25)
2. the attempt by angels to mix the orders of creation (cf. Gen. 6:1-4; II Pet. 2:4)
3. the homosexual activity of Sodom and Gomorrah toward angels (cf. Gen. 19; II Pet. 2:6)

▣ **“and the cities around them”** These cities are listed by name in Deut. 29:23.

▣ **“same way”** This is an ACCUSATIVE which relates grammatically to the angels (cf. v. 6), not “the neighboring towns.” It has been speculated that Jude used these OT illustrations because as angels took women in Genesis 6, so here men tried to take angels (cf. Gen. 18:22; 19:1). If so, this would be another example of the attempt to mix the orders of creation. However, to me it seems that the inhabitants of Sodom did not know these were angels and thought them to be men (cf. Gen. 18:22).

▣ **“gross immorality and went after strange flesh”** This is in reference to “different kind of (*heteros*) flesh.” This seems to relate both to (1) the angels and women according to Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* 1:3:1 and (2) the homosexuality (cf. Rom. 1:26-27) so prevalent in the area of Sodom.

▣ **“are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire”** Jude uses these OT examples as a clear warning to his readers. Beware of sexual exploitation by anyone.

The NT speaks clearly of eternal punishment (cf. Matt. 25:41,46; II Thess. 2:8-9; Rev. 19:20; 20:11,14-15; 21:28; and also I Enoch 54:1). This subject is difficult to discuss because the Bible does not give much information about heaven or hell. It affirms their reality, but does not reveal specific information, usually describing them in metaphorical language. Jesus uses the “valley of the sons of Hinnom,” which was just south of Jerusalem and was used by the Israelis under Manasseh for the worship of Molech, the Canaanite fire god who required child sacrifice. The Jews, out of shame and regret for their own participation in these fertility rites, turned this locality into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Jesus’ metaphors of fire, smoke, and worms came from this place, Gehenna.

This place of torment was not created for mankind, but rebellious angels (cf. Matt. 25:41). Evil at all levels will be removed and segregated from God’s creation. Hell is the Bible’s way of describing this permanent divide.

Before I leave this topic let me express the pain with which I approach this subject. This is the only suffering in the Bible that is not redemptive. This is not the will of God for anyone. It is a result of willful, continuous rebellion, both angelic and human. It is an open, bleeding sore in the heart of God that will never heal! God’s willingness to allow free will among His creatures results in some painful, eternal losses.

*The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. II, p. 379 mentions that Jude’s description of the punishment of these angels is very similar to I Enoch 10:4-6,11,13; 12:4; 15:3; 19:1. This seems to confirm Jude’s familiarity with this interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic work.

**2:7-8 “the righteous Lot”** This may be an allusion to (1) the extra-canonical Jewish book of the Wisdom of Solomon 10:6 or (2) a rabbinical tradition. Lot was spiritually grieved by the actions of contemporary evil people (some rabbinical tradition reflected in v. 8 and I Clem. 11:1) as II Peter’s readers were by the immoral false teachers.

This entire section is a form of OT typology. Things that happened in the history of Israel were being repeated in Peter’s day.

**2:9** This is the conclusion of the extended sentence begun in v. 4. God will rescue His own (i.e., Noah, v. 5 and Lot, v. 7) and hold the unrighteous accountable for their deeds (i.e., angels and humans).

**2:10 “those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires”** This refers to human instincts given by God but with certain restrictions (i.e., human sexuality, but within marriage). Fallen mankind takes God’s gifts beyond their God-given bounds for selfish, egocentric purposes (more and more for me at any cost).

▣ **“and despise authority”** This is parallel to Jude v. 8 in several ways.

### II Peter 2:10

1. indulge the flesh
2. despise authority
3. revile angelic majesties

### Jude v. 8

1. defile the flesh
2. reject authority
3. revile angelic majesties

Jude obviously refers to angels by this phrase, but II Peter may very well link it to v. 4 and further refer to rejecting Christ. I have included my notes of Jude 8.

## Notes from Jude Commentary

**v. 8 “Yet in the same way”** The false teachers of Jude’s day had similarities to the rebellious ones of old. The exact nature of the similarity is not specified.

▣ **“these”** This is Jude’s way of referring to the false teachers who had invaded the church (cf. vv. 8,10,12,14,16,19).

▣ **“also by dreaming”** This term is used of OT false prophets (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:25-32), those who claimed special revelations from God (cf. Col. 2:18).

▣ **“defile the flesh”** This is the metaphorical use of the term “stain.” There was obviously an amoral aspect to their teachings and/or lifestyles. All of these OT examples involved some type of sexual sin (cf. II Tim. 3:1ff; II Pet. 2).

▣ **“reject authority and revile angelic majesties”** There are three characteristics of “these.”

1. “defile the flesh”
2. “reject authority” (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)  
“despise God’s authority” (TEV)  
“disregard Authority” (NJB)
3. “revile angelic majesty” (NASB)  
“speak evil of dignitaries” (NKJV)  
“slander the glorious ones” (NRSV)  
“insult the glorious beings above” (TEV)  
“abuse the Glories as well” (NJB)

It is obvious the first has to do with sexual sins, but what of the second and third? The second designation, “reject authority,” has been interpreted at least two ways.

1. the Greek term for “authority” is *kuriotēa*, which is related to the term “Lord” (*kurios*); therefore some link this rejection (although the VERBALS are different) to the denial of Jesus in v. 4 (“our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”)
2. the Greek term for “authority” is *kuriotēta*, which is related to *kuriotēs*, used in II Pet. 2:10 (cf. Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) to refer to angels

This context seems to be referring to angels, so #2 fits best.

The third designation uses an OT term “glory” (*kabod*), which was used of God (cf. vv. 24,25; II Pet. 1:3,17; 3:18) and all things connected to God, especially in heaven or the life to come. In this instance Jude is picking up on the interbiblical expansion of this OT concept to refer to angelic beings, beings of power and authority.

This might even refer to the rejection of the OT Law because the Jews believed that angels served as mediators for YHWH giving the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Acts 7:35).

This point of the context is the out-of-bounds lifestyle of “these” false teachers in the area of morality and authority. The list of characteristics of the false teachers which began in vv. 1-4 is continued: (1) despise authority, v. 10; (2) like animals v. 12; (3) pleasure seekers, v. 13; (4) subvert love feasts v. 13; (5) cause weak believers to sin v. 14; and (6) promise freedom but they are slaves, v. 19.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10b-16

<sup>10b</sup>Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, <sup>11</sup>whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup>But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, <sup>13</sup>suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, <sup>14</sup>having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; <sup>15</sup>forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; <sup>16</sup>but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

2:10b “daring” (cf. Mark 12:34; 15:43)

▣ “self-willed” (cf. Titus 1:7)

▣ **“they do not tremble”** (cf. Matt. 28:4; Luke 8:47; Acts 7:32; I Cor. 2:3).

The three preceding terms describe the false teachers’ lack of respect for spiritual powers and authorities. They possibly relate to the Gnostics’ extensive theology of angelic levels (*aeons*) and the secret names of these angels necessary to supposedly pass through their realm on the way to fellowship with the high, good god.



NASB	“angelic majesties”
NKJV	“speak evil of dignitaries”
NRSV	“slander the glorious ones”
TEV	“no respect for the glorious being above”
NJB	“offending the glorious one”

See note in previous section from Jude on “glories” (*doxai*).

**2:11 “do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord”** This is parallel to Jude 9, which may be a quote from *The Assumption of Moses*. It relates an incident between Michael (i.e., the Arch Angel and guardian of Israel) and Satan over the body of Moses (cf. Deut. 34:6).

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase.

1. before the Lord (*para* with the LOCATIVE,  $\aleph$ , B, C, K, P, cf. NASB, NKJV, TEV, NJB)
2. from the Lord (*para* with the ABLATIVE, P<sup>72</sup>, cf. NRSV)

**2:12** This verse is parallel to Jude v. 10. Jude v. 9 describes Michael’s encounter with Satan. This verse in II Peter and Jude v. 10 describes how the false teachers react to angelic authority and power

1. they act like unreasoning animals
2. they are creatures of animal instinct

What they know (and how they act) will destroy them.

▣ **“destruction. . .destroyed”** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT (*phtheirō*)**

The basic meaning of this term *phtheirō* is destroy, ruin, corrupt, or spoil. It can be used for

1. financial ruin (possibly II Cor. 7:2)
2. physical destruction (cf. I Cor. 3:17a)
3. moral corruption (cf. Rom. 1:23; 8:21; I Cor. 15:33,42,50; Gal. 6:8; Rev. 19:2)
4. sexual seduction (cf. II Cor. 11:3)
5. eternal destruction (cf. II Pet. 2:12,19)
6. perishing traditions of men (cf. Col. 2:22; I Cor. 3:17b)

Often this term is used in the same context as its negated opposite (cf. Rom. 1:23; I Cor. 9:25; 15:50,53). Notice the parallel contrasts between our earthly physical bodies and our heavenly eternal bodies.

1. corruptible vs. incorruptible, I Cor. 15:42,50
2. dishonor vs. glory, I Cor. 15:43
3. weakness vs. power, I Cor. 15:43
4. natural body vs. spiritual body, I Cor. 15:44
5. first Adam vs. last Adam, I Cor. 15:45
6. image of the earthly vs. image of the heavenly, I Cor. 15:49

**2:13 “suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong”** This is an unusual construction which is either (1) an idiom or (2) a word play (i.e., *adikoumenoi*, meaning “suffering wrong” and *adikias*, translated “of wrong”).

▣ **“to revel in the daytime”** They flaunt their actions for all to see. This phrase and the last phrase of v. 12 are saying the same thing.



NASB	“stains and blemishes”
NKJV	“spots and blemishes”
NRSV	“blots and blemishes”

**TEV** “a shame and a disgrace”  
**NJB** “unsightly blots”

The first term *spilas* (and its forms) has two distinct meanings: (1) originally it refers to unseen dangers, literally, hidden or shallow reefs (cf. Jude v. 12) and (2) stains or spots (cf. Eph. 5:27; James 3:6; II Pet. 2:13; Jude v. 23).

The second term is somewhat synonymous. It is used metaphorically of “blemishes” or “spots.” Both of these refer to the immoral false teachers’ sexually preying on believers at the Christian love feasts (the Lord’s Supper meal).

☐  
**NASB** “as they carouse with you”  
**NKJV, NRSV** “while they feast with you”  
**TEV** “join in your meals”  
**NJB** “even when they are sharing your table”

This is parallel to Jude v. 12. The meal referred to was called “The Love Feast” (cf. I Cor. 11:17-22), which was a communal Eucharist of the believing community.

**2:14 “eyes full of adultery”** They looked at every woman at Christ’s table as a sex object. These false teachers were sexually exploitive (cf. 2:2,10,14,18). The rabbis say that the eyes are the windows of the soul. Sin begins in the thought life. These false teachers’ eyes never rest!

☐ **“enticing unstable souls”** They snare and entrap weak or new believers (cf. Matt. 18:6; II Tim. 3:6).

☐ **“having a heart trained in greed”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. We get the English word “gymnasium” from this word. They regularly trained to get more and more for themselves at any cost! See Special Topic: Heart at Mark 2:6.

☐  
**NASB** “accursed children”  
**NKJV** “and are accursed children”  
**NRSV** “Accursed children”  
**TEV** “They are under God’s curse”  
**NJB** “They are under a curse”

This is a Hebrew idiom (cf. Eph. 2:3). They demonstrate the characteristics and settled character of their father, the Devil. The positive opposite of this idiom is “obedient children” of I Pet. 1:14!

**2:15 “forsaking the right way”** This reflects the Hebrew idiom for “sin” (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB). Righteousness was described as a path or road. The godly were to follow the path (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23). Any deviation from the path was sin.

☐ **“have gone astray”** The term “astray” is our English word “planet,” which meant “wanderer.” This is parallel to Jude v. 13.

☐ **“the way of Balaam”** This same OT incident is mentioned in Jude v. 11. It is recorded in Num. 22-25; 31:8,16. As Balaam desired money, so too, these false teachers (i.e., greed, v. 14).

☐  
**NASB, NKJV,**  
**TEV** “Beor”  
**NRSV, NJB** “Bosor”

The first reading is from the Septuagint of Numbers 22 and is the reading in MS B. The second reading is found in MSS P<sup>72</sup>, N<sup>2</sup>, A<sup>c</sup>, C, and UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it an “A” rating (certain). However, there is no example of this name anywhere else.

**2:16 “a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man”** This refers to Num. 22:24 and 31, another OT incident involving an angel.

#### **NASB (UPDATED TEXT: 2:17-22**

<sup>17</sup>These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. <sup>18</sup>For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, <sup>19</sup>promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. <sup>20</sup>For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup>For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. <sup>22</sup>It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”

**2:17 “springs without water and mists”** This is paralleled in Jude v. 12. They had the promise of blessing, but gave only death.

▣ **“for whom the black darkness has been reserved”** This is literally “thick darkness of darkness” (cf. 2:4; Jude 6,13). The VERB is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE implying permanent judgment and confinement by God.

This is also paralleled in Jude v. 13. It is a metaphor for eternal punishment using darkness (cf. Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 and I Enoch 10:4-5; 63:6).

**2:18**

NASB “speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity”  
NKJV “speak great swelling words of emptiness”  
NRSV “speak bombastic nonsense”  
TEV “make proud and stupid statements”  
NJB “high-sounding but empty talk”

This is parallel to v. 17 and Jude 12-13,16. They appear spiritual and truthful, but it is a sham, a deception.

▣

NASB “they entice by fleshly desire”  
NKJV “they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness”  
NRSV “with licentious desires of the flesh they entice”  
TEV “use immoral body lusts to trap”  
NJB “they tempt. . .by playing on the disordered desires of their human nature and debaucheries”

This is again the sexual aspects of the false teachers. They were in error not only theologically, but also morally.

▣

NASB “those who barely escape”  
NKJV “the ones who actually escaped”  
NRSV “who have just escaped”  
TEV “those who are just beginning to escape”  
NJB “people who have scarcely escaped”

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase.

1. *oligōs*, meaning “almost” (cf. MSS P<sup>72</sup>, N<sup>2</sup>, A, B, and the Vulgate; Syriac, and Coptic translations)
2. *ontōs*, meaning “truly” or “actually” (cf. MSS N<sup>\*</sup>, C, and the Armenian and Slavonic translations).

The theological issue is were these believers being led astray (cf. NKJV, NRSV, NIV) or were they almost believers (cf. NASB, NRSV [footnote], TEV)? The context of vv. 20-21 surely implies they were believers (i.e., FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE).

**2:19 “promising them freedom”** These false teachers were promising freedom in two senses: (1) a theological freedom based on secret knowledge of the angelic spheres and (2) a freedom from moral restraints based on salvation only involving an intellectual attainment (i.e., libertine or antinomian gnostics).

Paul urged believers not to use their freedom as a license to sin (cf. Gal. 2:16), as did Peter (cf. I Pet. 2:16). Freedom has always been the forbidden fruit. Self control is a mark of spiritual maturity (cf. Gal. 5:23). This is not in the Stoic sense of self mastery, but in the Christian sense of a believers yielding to the indwelling Spirit and conforming themselves to God’s revelation (the NT). The real question then is who or what controls and/or characterizes our lives?

▣ **“corruption”** See Special Topic at 2:12.

**2:20 “if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL that is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. This implies that the victims of v. 18 were believers.

▣ **“they have escaped the defilements of the world”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which implies a completed action (their profession of faith in Christ). The gospel had freed them from the power of the fallen nature (cf. Rom. 6).

▣ **“by the knowledge of the Lord”** This is the term *epignōskō*, which has the connotation of full experiential knowledge (cf. 1:2). The means of their salvation was the gospel which is a person, truth about that person, and a lifestyle like that person. The false teachers violated all three!

▣ **“they are again entangled in them and are overcome”** The first VERBAL is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, while the second is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Notice the PASSIVE VOICE, which implies an outside agency (i.e., the false teachers or the evil

one). The immediate context defines the entanglement as sensuality and fleshly desires. For a good discussion of this verse see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 729-730. I fully concur with their assessment.

▣ **“the last state has become worse for them than the first”** This could relate to (1) new believers (vv. 14b, 18b, 21) or (2) the false teachers (vv. 17, 18a). This same ambiguity relates to v. 19.

**2:21** How could their condition be worse? (1) They became vaccinated against the real faith. They are like Heb. 2:1-4; 6:4-6 and 10:26-31 (i.e., unbelievers in the presence of great light); (2) This could refer to new or weak believers' lifestyle witness being lost more than their personal salvation. There is an intense warfare between the old and new natures (cf. Romans 7), both before salvation and even after.

▣ **“the way of righteousness”** This refers to the gospel, as does “the holy commandment” also in v. 21 and “the knowledge of the Lord” in v. 20 (cf. 3:2).

**2:22 “the true proverb”** The proverb of the dog is from the MT, not the LXX of Pro. 26:11. The proverb of the hog is from the Aramaic wisdom book of Ahikan (i.e., 8:18), which was well known to the Jews during the Assyrian exile. Ahikan is mentioned in the Jewish book *Tobit* as a wise man from one of the northern ten exiled tribes. Jewish tradition says he rose to be a high government official (i.e., like Daniel) during the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. These false teachers looked as if they were believers (i.e., wise men), but their actions showed it was only a surface change and not true repentance (cf. Matthew 7 and 13).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Were the false teachers true Christians? (v. 1)
2. Were their followers Christians?
3. List the characteristics of these false teachers.
4. Why is there so much talk of angels in this chapter?
5. What is the implication of verses 20-22?

# II PETER 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Promise of the Lord's Coming	God's Promise Is Not Slack	The Day of the Lord	The Promise of the Lord's Coming	The Day of the Lord: The Prophets and Apostles
3:1-7	3:1-9	3:1-7	3:1-7	3:1-2
				The Day of the Lord: False Teachers
				3:3-7
3:8-13	The Day of the Lord	3:8-10	3:8-9	3:8-10
	3:10-13		3:10-13	Fresh Call to Holiness. Doxology
	Be Steadfast	3:11-13		3:11-18
3:14-18	3:14-18	3:14-18	3:14-16	
			3:17-18	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. v)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-7

<sup>1</sup>This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, <sup>2</sup>that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. <sup>3</sup>Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup>and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." <sup>5</sup>For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, <sup>6</sup>through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup>But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

**3:1 "beloved"** This term is originally used by God the Father for the Son at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) and His transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5 and II Pet. 1:17). It becomes a title for God's people (cf. Rom. 1:7). It is only used once in I Peter (cf. 2:11; 4:12), but used extensively in II Peter 3 (cf. 3:1,8,14,15-17). It is also very common in I and III John.



▣ **“the second letter”** This apparently refers to I Peter, if you believe Peter is the source behind both I and II Peter, which I do.



NASB     **“sincere minds”**  
NKJV     **“your pure minds”**  
NRSV     **“your sincere intention”**  
TEV      **“your pure thoughts”**  
NJB      **“an unclouded understanding”**

This term can mean pure in the sense of sincere or morally straight (cf. Phil. 1:10). The false teachers were not pure in any sense. They were immoral and manipulative self-seekers.

▣ **“by way of reminder”** These are almost exactly the words of 1:13-14 (cf. Jude 17). In the Bible humans are often called on to remember God, His Word, and His acts. God, however, is encouraged to forget their sin (i.e., Jer. 31:34; Isa. 43:25; metaphorical in Ps. 103:3; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 44:22; Micah 7:18).

**3:2 “remember the words”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE. This is a strong emphasis on knowing (1) the OT (cf. 1:21); (2) the words of Jesus (cf. 2:21); and (3) and their apostolic application (cf. 1:1). This is parallel to Jude 17.

The knowing/remembering was meant to affect believer confidence in the Second Coming and their Christlike living!

▣ **“spoken beforehand by the holy prophets”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which implies the permanent revelation (PERFECT TENSE, cf. Matt. 5:17-19; I Pet. 1:25) given by the Spirit (PASSIVE VOICE, cf. II Pet. 1:20-21).

This refers to all the OT. The Jews believed that all Scripture was written by prophets. This is why Moses is called a prophet in Deut. 18:15 and that Joshua through Kings are called the “former prophets.”

▣ **“the commandment of the Lord and Savior”** This was an idiom referring to the gospel (“the holy commandment,” cf. 2:21; “the commandment,” I Tim. 6:14). It is related to the idiom “the law of Christ” (cf. Gal. 6:2).

▣ **“your apostles”** As prophet gave the first covenant, Apostles give the second!

**3:3 “know this first of all”** This same phrase is used in 1:20. Peter uses this literary idiom to mark his main points.

▣ **“in the last days”** This OT phrase denotes the period of time just before the culmination of human history. Peter is a bit ambiguous as to what time period this refers. In chapter two he speaks of false teaching “coming,” yet they are already present in his day. This is theologically similar to John’s “antichrist. . . antichrists” of I John 2:18. These false teachers and mockers will characterize every future period of church history, beginning with the first century. See Special Topic at Mark 13:8.

▣ **“mockers will come with *their* mockings”** This is parallel to Jude 18. The NOMINATIVE and INSTRUMENTAL forms of the same NOUN are used for emphasis. These false teachers were making and will continue to make fun of the biblical promises about Christ’s return (cf. v. 4).

▣ **“following after their own lusts”** The false teachers are obvious because of their words and deeds (cf. Matt. 7:15-20 and II Tim. 3:2-5). This is parallel to Jude 18.

**3:4 “where is the promise of His coming”** This could refer to (1) the OT Day of YHWH’s Coming or (2) the NT Second Coming of Christ.



NASB, NKJV     **“the fathers”**  
NRSV, TEV     **“our ancestors”**  
NJB             **“our Fathers”**

The OT period is mentioned in v. 2, so “the Fathers” must refer to the OT Patriarchs or tribal leaders. This is confirmed by vv. 4-6, which speak of creation.

The context clearly refers to God’s visitation in judgment (cf. II Peter 2). The OT asserts that humans will one day give an account to God for the stewardship of the gift of life (i.e., Matt. 25:31-46; 20:11-15). These mockers not only depreciated Jesus’ incarnation, they also scoffed at His return as Judge.

▣ **“fell asleep”** This is an OT euphemism for death, which is continued in the NT (cf. Matt. 27:53; Mark. 5:39; John 11:11; I Cor. 11:30; 15:51; Eph. 5:14; I Thess. 4:14).

▣ **“all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation”** Human history, though minimal in time compared to geological history, gives humans the sense of regularity. This is the presupposition of modern science (i.e., Uniformitarianism) that natural process and regularity of natural laws can be projected both backward and forward in time. The Bible asserts that there was a beginning to creation and there will be an end. God created with a purpose. That purpose was fellowship with creatures made in His image who reflect His character. The world is accountable to an ethical, moral God. However, the illusion of endless time and the regularity of nature has caused the false teachers to reject the revelation of Scripture, Jesus’ words, and Apostolic proclamation. Human history and individual longevity are long enough to lull humans into a false perception of confidence in a “tomorrow just like today”!

**3:5**

**NASB** “it escapes their notice”  
**NKJV** “they willfully forget”  
**NRSV, NJB** “they deliberately ignore”  
**TEV** “they purposely ignore”

This term has the connotation of forgetting something or hiding something; therefore, an intent of purposefulness is contained in the term (cf. 1:9; 3:5,8). These false teachers “conveniently forgot” or “chose to ignore” the intervention of God into His creation and His stated intent to all-creation accountability (i.e., judgment).

▣ **“by the word of God”** This is creation by the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1:3,6,8,14,20,24). It is called in theology by the Latin term “fiat,” which means “by means of the spoken word,” see John L. Walter, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, where he asserts that Genesis 1 is not the creation of matter, but a functioning universe. The Gnostic false teachers denied that a holy God could form, much less, create sinful, coexistent matter.

▣

**NASB, TEV** “the earth was formed out of water and by water”  
**NKJV** “the earth standing out of water and in the water”  
**NRSV** “and earth was formed out of water and by means of water”  
**NJB** “the earth was formed by the word of God out of water and between the waters”

Water is a significant element in Gen. 1:2 (“the deep” and “the waters”). It is not mentioned as being specifically spoken into existence. The Greek PREPOSITION “through” (*dia*) water can also mean “between,” “circled,” “amidst,” “action of,” or “sustained by” (cf. Ps. 24:2; 136:6). This phrase could refer to Gen. 1:2; 1:6; or 1:9.

**3:6 “the world was destroyed”** This refers to Noah’s flood (cf. Gen. 6-8). I have included a brief note from my commentary on Gen. 1-11.

#### GENESIS

“There has been some conjecture that the term “flood” may be related to the Assyrian term “to destroy.” Was the flood of Noah’s day world-wide or only in the Ancient Near East? The term “earth” is often translated “land” in a local sense. If humans had not spread out to all the parts of the earth, which is surely implied in the tower of Babel experience of chapters 10-11, then a local flood would have done the job. The best book I have read on the rational evidence for a local flood is Bernard Ramm’s *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (p. 62).

**3:7**

**NASB** “by His word”  
**NKJV, NRSV** “by the same word”  
**TEV** “by the same command”  
**NJB** “it is the same Word”

As God created by the spoken word and reigns by the word (i.e., Christ, cf. John 1:1), we were born again by the living and abiding Word of God (I Pet. 1:23). He will also cleanse by the spoken word (i.e., flood judgment, fire judgment). The metaphor of Jesus in Rev. 19:15 as returning with a two-edged sword from His mouth is another way to express this same truth.

▣ **“the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire”** This is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which speaks of something that has already occurred. Here it is used in the prophetic sense of the certainty of a future event based on the trustworthiness of God’s word. This entire context emphasizes the power and pre-eminence of God’s word (cf. 1:19; 3:5,7; I Pet. 1:23; 2:8; 3:1).

This judgment by fire may come from the OT in two senses: (1) the Psalms speak of fire going before the Lord (cf. 18:8; 50:3; 97:3) or (2) the judgments of YHWH in the wilderness wanderings (cf. Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1-3; 16:35; 26:10) or eschatological (cf. Dan. 7:10; Isa. 30:27,30,33).

Fire often accompanies YHWH's presence in the OT. This may be associated with (1) God as an agent of knowledge and revelation (light); (2) God as a purifying agent; or (3) God as a judge (i.e., destroying agent).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE**

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

### **A. Positive**

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
8. Protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

### **A. Negative**

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

### **C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors**

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)

### **D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.**

▣ **“kept for the day of judgment. . .of ungodly men”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Both II Peter 2 and Jude have emphasized that evil angels and evil humans are kept for a day of accounting. All conscious creatures (cf. Phil. 2:9-11) will one day be held accountable as stewards of the gift of life (cf. Gal. 6:7).

This eschatological day is a time of judgment for the ungodly, but a time of great reward for believers. The persecuted church needs to remember that one day God will set all things right!

▣ **“destruction”** We get the English word Apollyon from this word (cf. Rev. 9:11).

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-10**

<sup>8</sup>But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

3:8

NASB “do not let this one *fact* escape your notice”

NKJV “do not forget this one thing”

NRSV “do not ignore this one fact”

TEV “do not forget one thing”

NJB “there is one thing. . .you must never forget”

This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually implies “stop an act in process.” Because of the persecution (cf. I Pet.) and the false teachers (cf. II Pet.) believers were beginning to question the trustworthiness of the biblical eschatological events.

▣ **“one day is like a thousand years”** This is an allusion to Ps. 90:4. It asserts the truth that time is not a factor with an eternal God. Only His creatures experience past, present, and future. We are time-bound, time-conscious. Believers must hold on to the truth that what God promises, God will do (cf. I Kgs. 8:24,26,56). We trust in His character, His promises, His word, and His Son! Time is irrelevant although God uses time for His unfolding purposes.

The first generation of believers expected Jesus to return quickly (cf. Mark 13:30). This is one reason why they did not write down Jesus’ words and deeds (the Gospels) for many years. But with the continuing delay

1. the eyewitnesses began to die
2. false teachers began factions
3. some began to wonder why

Both Paul (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and Peter (cf. II Peter 3) address this subject of the delayed Second Coming. Even in the teachings of Jesus there is a tension between the imminent return (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30) and “some events must occur first”

1. return world-wide evangelization, cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10
2. the revelation of the “man of sin,” cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13
3. the great persecution, cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13

Peter uniquely links the delay with God’s compassion for the lost! God is delaying Christ’s return so that more may repent and turn to Him through Christ. Believers’ godly lives are to point the unbelievers toward God!

**3:9 “the Lord is not slow”** This use of “the Lord” must refer to YHWH. God’s unfolding plan (cf. Hab. 2:3) of creation and redemption seems so slow to humans. The time element allows us to exercise trust within time. This period of our lives is the only time believers live by faith, which pleases God. Our patience and godly living are expressions and evidence of our faith/trust commitment to Him.

▣ **“but is patient toward you”** One of the characteristics of God is His long-suffering patience toward both sinners and saints. However, His patience is taken advantage of by both groups. His patience has a purpose, the restoring of the image lost in the Fall.

▣ **“not wishing for any to perish”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. God wants all humans to be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 17:30; Rom. 11:32; I Tim. 2:4,6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; I John 2:2). Because all humans are made in His image for personal fellowship, He sent His Son to die so that all may respond to Him (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). This is an important balance to theological systems which major on God’s place in salvation, but minimize mankind’s needed covenantal response. I have included my notes from I Tim. 2:4 (Vol. 9, p. 25) regarding this topic.

#### Notes from my commentary on I TIMOTHY 2:4

**2:4 “who desires all men to be saved”** Believers are to pray for all people because God wants all people saved. This was a shocking statement to the exclusivistic false teachers, whether Gnostic or Jewish or, more probably in the pastoral letters, a combination. This is the great truth about God’s love for all mankind (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; John 3:16; Acts 17:30; Rom. 11:22; I Tim. 2:4,6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2). This verse shows the imbalance of dogmatic, super-lapsarian, double-edged predestination which emphasizes God’s sovereignty to the exclusion of any needed human response. The stated truths of “five point” Calvinism, especially “irresistible grace” and “limited atonement” violate the covenant aspect of biblical faith. It is improper to reduce God to a puppet of human free will, as it is also improper to reduce mankind to a puppet of divine will. God in His sovereignty has chosen to deal with fallen mankind by means of covenant. He always initiates and structures the covenant (cf. John 6:44,65), but He has mandated that humans must respond and continue to respond in repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21), as well as obedience and perseverance!

Often the theological discussion of God’s sovereignty (predestination) and human free will deteriorates into a proof-texting contest. The Bible clearly reveals the sovereignty of YHWH. However, it also reveals that His highest creation, mankind, made in His image, had been given the awesome personal quality of moral decision making. Humans must co-operate with God in every area of life.

The term “many” has been used to assert that God has chosen some (the elect) but not all; that Jesus died for some, not all. A careful reading of the following texts shows that these are used in a parallel sense!

##### Isaiah 53

1. “all” (v. 6)
2. “many” (vv. 11-12)

##### Romans 5

1. “all” (v. 18)
2. “many” (v. 19)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelical (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18, 19-20, 21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

▣ **“for all to come to repentance”** Notice the emphasis on “all,” not just “some” (i.e., elect). Everyone is potentially elect in Christ. See Special Topic: Repentance at Mark 1:4.

**3:10 “the day of the Lord will come like a thief”** This phrase “the day of the Lord” is an OT phrase for the end of time. Thieves are often used as a metaphor for an unexpected visitation (cf. Matt. 24:43-44; Luke 12:39; I Thess. 5:2; Rev. 3:3; 16:15) from God (i.e., Judgment Day/Second Coming/Resurrection Day).

▣ **“the heavens will pass away”** This is a recurring theme (i.e., physical creation will cease, but not God’s word, cf. Mark 13:31; Matt. 5:18; 24:35) describing the temporality and finitude of physical creation (cf. Rev. 21:1).



NASB, NJB	“with a roar”
NKJV	“with a great noise”
NRSV	“with a loud noise”
TEV	“with a shrill noise”

This word has the connotation of a whizzing sound of something moving rapidly through the air. The consummation and cleansing of the new age will come with a sound and flame much like the inauguration of the new age at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:2-3).

▣ **“the elements”** Most words develop from a literal, physical sense to a metaphorical extension. This term (*stoicheia*) originally referred to something in a row, a series. It developed into several connotations:

1. The basic physical building blocks of the world (air, water, earth, and fire, cf. II Pet. 3:10, 12).
2. The basic teachings of a subject (cf. Heb. 5:12; 6:1 for Judaism).
3. The angelic powers behind the heavenly bodies (cf. I Enoch 52:8-9; the early church fathers; Col. 2:8, 20; I Cor. 15:24) or the angelic ranks (*aeons*) of the Gnostic false teachers (cf. Col. 2:10, 15; Eph. 3:10).
4. Angels hostile to mankind who tried to stop the giving of the Law to Moses (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:2).
5. Possibly the impersonal structures of our fallen world that allow fallen mankind to appear independent from God (education, government, medicine, religion, etc., cf. Gal. 4:3, 8-9 and Hendrik Berkhof’s *Christ and the Powers* by Herald Press, p. 32).

▣ **“with intense heat”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE implying God as an unnamed agent. This was a medical term to denote high fever.



NASB	“the earth and its works will be burned up”
NKJV	“the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”
NRSV	“the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed”
TEV	“the earth with everything in it will vanish”
NJB	“the earth and all it contains will be burned up”

There are many Greek manuscript variants in this phrase.

1. “will be discovered” (cf. MSS  $\aleph$ , B, K, P)
2. “will be found destroyed” (cf. MS P<sup>72</sup>)
3. “will be burned up” (cf. MS A)
4. “will be hidden” (cf. MS C)

There is no certainty of the original Greek text, or even probability, in the translation of this phrase.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:11-13

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup>looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup>But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

**3:11 “what sort of people ought you to be”** The false teachers de-emphasized morality and lifestyle godliness, so Peter continues to hold these things up.

▣ **“in holy conduct and godliness”** The term “godliness” is an important concept in II Peter as it is in the Pastoral Letters. I am reproducing my notes from I Tim. 4:7 (cf. Vol. 9, p. 53). II Peter uses the NOUN in 1:3,6,7 and 3:11 and the ADVERB in 2:9.

### Notes from my commentary on I TIMOTHY

▣ **“godliness”** This is a pivotal term in the Pastoral Letters. It refers to the doctrinal and daily lifestyle implications of the gospel (cf. 3:16). It describes not the exceptional, but the expected. It is a compound term from “good” (*eu*) and “worship” (*sebomai*). True worship is daily living by means of proper thinking (cf. 4:16a). Notice the number of times this word is used in the Pastoral Letters:

1. Noun (*eusebeia*), I Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11; II Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1
2. Adverb (*eusebēōs*), II Tim. 3:12; Titus 2:12
3. Verb (*eusebeō*), I Tim. 5:4
4. The related term *theosebeia*, I Tim. 2:10
5. The negated term (ALPHA PRIVATIVE, i.e., *asebeia*), II Tim. 2:16; Titus 2:12

## 3:12

NASB, NKJV **“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God”**

NRSV **“waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God”**

TEV **“as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it happen soon”**

NJB **“while you wait for the Day of God to come, and try to hasten its coming”**

These are both PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, which describe two aspects connected to the Second Coming, here uniquely called “the day of God.” The first term basically means “to look for expectantly” (cf. Acts 3:5; 10:24) or “to wait with apprehension” (cf. Luke 21:26; Acts 27:33; 28:6). It is used three times in II Peter 3:12,13, and 14. Believers wait expectantly, but unbelievers fear this day of reckoning.

The second term has two senses related to the grammatical structure in which it is found:

1. If it is a TRANSITIVE VERB (i.e., passes the action on to a DIRECT OBJECT) it means “to urge,” “to be eager for” (cf. footnotes of NRSV, ASV, NEB, NIV, Peshitta, and New Century Version, similar in meaning to the early church’s *maranatha*).
2. If it is an INTRANSITIVE grammatical construction (i.e., it describes a state of being or focuses on the agent of the action) it means “to hasten” (cf. Luke 19:5; Acts 22:18). The theology that believers’ actions can hasten the Lord’s return is found in Matt. 6:10 (prayer) and Acts 3:19-20 (revival); Romans 9-11 (full number of Gentiles and Jews are saved). In this context the godly lifestyle of believers is encouraged by an imminent eschatological hope.

This is a difficult expression because of our modern mind-set which depreciates paradox. God is sovereign and has set the date for Christ’s return, but the actions of believers (i.e., prayer, witness, godliness) may change the date (i.e., sooner or later). This is the covenant aspect of biblical truth which is so confusing to modern western people. God is affected by His children (both negatively and positively)! However, this very truth is why intercessory prayer works.

▣ **“because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat”** The interpretive question is, “Are these allusions literal or apocalyptic?” These OT-type statements have much in common with Isa. 10:10-13; 34:4; 51:6; Joel 2:28-32; Mic. 1:4. This context has referred several times to this physical realm of time and space ending in connection with heat. This cleansing sets the spiritual stage for the new heavens and the new earth. Will they be physical (Eden restored) or spiritual (cf. I Cor. 15:35-58)? It is hard to describe ultimate and spiritual realities in earthly human terms. The reality is not affected by the genre!

**3:13 “But according to His promise”** (cf. Isa. 65:17-25; 66:22-24)

▣ **“new heaven and a new earth”** (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; 65:17; 66:22; Rev.21:1-27)

☐ **“in which righteousness dwells”** God desires a setting and a people commensurate with His own character (cf. Isa. 45:24-25). A holy God demands a holy people (cf. Isa. 60:12; Matt. 5:48). It is the new creation because it is contrasted with the fallen creation (cf. Gen. 3).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:14-18**

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>16</sup>as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. <sup>17</sup>You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, <sup>18</sup>but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

**3:14 “be diligent to be found by Him in peace”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, which emphasizes urgency. Believers have a responsibility to live godly lives. There must be an appropriate covenantal response to God’s love.

The second VERBAL is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE. It apparently refers to “the day of God” in v. 12. Jesus often uses the illustration of believers as stewards put in charge of their master’s estate. They must be ready at any time for His return and at that time to give an account of their stewardship (cf. Mark 13:33-37; Luke 18:8).

Peace is only possible if (1) the person has responded to the gospel offer; (2) the person understands the gospel message; and (3) the person is daily living out the gospel. The false teachers and their followers fail on all three counts and they have no peace!

☐ **“spotless and blameless”** This phrase is used in I Peter 1:19 to refer to Christ (cf. John 8:46; 14:30; Luke 23:41; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27; I Pet. 2:22; 3:18; I John 2:2; 4:14). It is an OT metaphor to describe the purity of sacrificial animals (cf. Lev. 22:19-20). We are to live in light of (1) Christ’s example, (2) Christ’s commands, and (3) Christ’s coming!

### **3:15**

**NASB, NRSV “regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation”**

**NKJV “and account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation”**

**TEV “Look on our Lord’s patience as the opportunity he is giving you to be saved”**

**NJB “Think of our Lord’s patience as your opportunity to be saved”**

To whom does this refer (1) Christians who are already saved or (2) the ungodly and rebellious false teachers and their followers? It is obviously looking back to God’s patience in v. 9. Some take advantage of God’s mercy to sin and live self-centered lives. Others embrace God’s forgiveness and emulate His character.

☐ **“just as our beloved brother Paul”** This phrase clearly shows that there was no tension between Paul and Peter. Each of them recognized the call and giftedness of the other (cf. Gal. 2:7-10). The incident recorded in Gal. 2:11-21 did not cause a permanent rift.

☐ **“wrote to you”** It is uncertain as to which of Paul’s letters this refers. If the recipients (Asia Minor) are the same as I Peter and Paul wrote Galatians to a northern group of churches in Asia Minor, then Galatians was written early to the same area that II Peter is written to, and the best possible option is Galatians. But in reality we do not know.

Option number two is that since the general topic of this chapter is the Second Coming, then possibly Paul’s early letters to the Thessalonians is what is referred to. Option three is that some speculate that part of Romans functioned originally as a cyclical letter. For me Galatians or Romans, which are Paul’s more salvation-oriented theological books, are probably the best guess.

**3:16 “as also in all *his* letters”** Much of the criticism of II Peter being written by the Apostle Peter relates to this reference to Paul’s letters. It is true that all of Paul’s letters were gathered together and circulated under the title “The Apostle,” but this happened much later than Peter’s death under Nero (A.D. 64-68). However, this text does not assert how many of Paul’s letters Peter is talking about, nor does this reference imply the circulation of the entire corpus.

☐ **“speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand”** What things? (1) Revelation (cf. 3:2); (2) the last days (3:4a); (3) creation (3:4b-5); (4) the flood of Noah (3:6); (5) judgment day (3:7,10); (6) God’s time (3:9); (7) the Second Coming (3:12); (8) the new age of righteousness (3:12-13); (9) personal salvation (3:14a, 15a); (10) godly living (3:11,14b); or (11) something in chapter one or two?

Whatever it was the false teachers misunderstood it and twisted it to their own ruin. In this sense it is possibly Paul's emphasis on salvation as a free gift from God apart from human works of righteousness (i.e., justification by faith). It is possible that James (cf. James 2:14-26) corrects another misunderstanding of Paul's preaching.

▣ **“which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures”** It is helpful to me to realize that the Apostles who personally walked with Jesus for several years did not always understand Him (cf. Mark 9:32; Luke 2:50; 9:45; 18:34; John 2:22; 10:6; 12:16; 16:18). Neither did all the Apostles understand the writings of other Apostles. We are called to be a faithful witness and godly covenant brother! None of us understands all things.

In the NT the term “Scriptures” always refers to the OT. The NT was not completed and compiled until the end of the first century. Most of the familiar texts on inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture refer to the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-19; I Cor. 2:9-13; I Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16; I Pet. 1:23-25; II Pet. 1:20-21).

This is one of the very few places where NT writings are equated with OT Scriptures. Peter affirms Paul's inspiration and the authority of his writings by this phrase.

▣ **“to their own destruction”** The Bible is God's self-revelation to a lost and needy world. Sinful humans (i.e., false teachers) twist it to their own peril. Judgment is coming; Jesus is the only hope; everyone will stand before God one day!

**3:17 “knowing this beforehand”** False teachers are always present! The readers were worried about the false teachers' use of Scripture (i.e., OT) and Apostolic writings (cf. 3:2). There are several biblical ways to discern a false teacher.

1. signs or wonders, but in the name of another god (Deut. 13:1-5)
2. accurate prediction of the future, but in the name of another god (Deut. 18:18-22)
3. lifestyle (Matt. 7; James, I John, and II Peter)
4. miracles are not automatically a sign of God (Matt. 24:24)
5. message must be Christocentric (I John 4:1-6)
6. misinterpretation of God's revelation (II Pet. 3:2)

▣ **“be on your guard”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This is a military term like I Peter 1:4. Believers have a personal responsibility to continue to check and evaluate what others say about God/Christ. There are deceivers both within and without the fellowship (cf. Eph. 4:14; 6:11-12). Do not be spiritually naive!

▣ **“so that you are not carried away”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. It is the opposite of the OT term for faith that meant to be firm-footed (i.e., steadfastness or stability). This same term describes Peter's own actions in Gal. 2:13.

**3:18 “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It has been a central theme of the book. Believers guard against error by growing in the knowledge of the gospel and living out the gospel. This is parallel to Jude 20.

▣ **“To Him *be* the glory”** This phrase is used predominately of God the Father (see note at I Pet. 4:11, cf. Jude vv. 24-25), but occasionally of Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:18; II Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:6).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term which referred to a pair of scales and meant “to be heavy.” That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:12). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term glory is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the holiness or perfection of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22)

It is first used of YHWH's presence with His people in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10.



NASB, NRSV **“both now and to the day of eternity”**

NKJV **“both now and forever”**

TEV **“now and forever”**

NJB **“in time and eternity”**

This is literally “both now and unto a day of age.” It is a unique form of a typical ending, somewhat parallel to Jude v. 25. The Jews saw history in terms of two ages, an evil age and a coming age of righteousness. This coming age is synonymous with the eternal kingdom. See Special Topic at Mark 13:8.



▣ **“Amen”** This word is absent in the ancient uncial Greek manuscript B (i.e., Vaticanus), but present in P<sup>72</sup>, א, A, and C. See Special Topic at Mark 3:28.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Gnostics deny the Second Coming?
2. What is the major message of the NT concerning the Second Coming?
3. Why does Peter mention Paul’s writings?

# APPENDIX ONE

## BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 B.C.) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 B.C.-A.D. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the ancient near east and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the VERBALS. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the TENSE, VOICE and MOOD (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular VERB (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

### I. TENSE

- A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the VERBS to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "PERFECTIVE" and "IMPERFECTIVE."
  - 1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
  - 2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

- B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing
  - 1. It occurred = AORIST
  - 2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT
  - 3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT
  - 4. It is occurring = PRESENT
  - 5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT
  - 6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these TENSES help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

- 1. AORIST – "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
- 2. PERFECT – "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
- 3. PRESENT – "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
- 4. FUTURE – "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

- C. In focusing on VERB TENSES, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain TENSE. The standard "no frills" tense was the AORIST. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" VERB form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other TENSE was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?
  - 1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").

2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 “Peter was standing at the door outside.”
3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, “Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning.” “Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin.”
4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, “then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him.”
5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, “Blessed are...they will....”

## II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the VERB and its SUBJECT.
- B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the VERB.
- C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the subject was receiving the action of the VERB produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following PREPOSITIONS and cases:
  1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
  2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22).
  3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the INSTRUMENTAL CASE.
  4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the INSTRUMENTAL CASE alone.
- D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the subject produces the action of the VERB and is also directly involved in the action of the VERB. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
  1. REFLEXIVE – the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 “hanged himself.”
  2. INTENSIVE – the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”
  3. RECIPROCAL – the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 “they counseled with one another.”

## III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the VERB to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The MOODS are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).
- B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author’s mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”
- D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God forbid”), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST TENSES in the NT.

- F. Some grammars categorize PARTICIPLES as another type of MOOD. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as VERBAL ADJECTIVES. They are translated in conjunction with the main VERB to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating PARTICIPLES. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was the normal or “unmarked” way to record an occurrence. Any other TENSE, VOICE or MOOD had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

## V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, NOUNS are classified by CASE. CASE was that inflected form of a NOUN that showed its relationship to the VERB and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the CASE functions were indicated by PREPOSITIONS. Since the CASE form was able to identify several different relationships, the PREPOSITIONS developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek CASE are categorized in the following eight ways:
  1. The NOMINATIVE CASE was used for naming and it usually was the SUBJECT of the sentence or clause. It was also used for PREDICATE NOUNS and ADJECTIVES with the linking VERBS “to be” or “become.”
  2. The GENITIVE CASE was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, “What kind?” It was often expressed by the use of the English PREPOSITION “of.”
  3. The ABLATIVE CASE used the same inflected form as the GENITIVE, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English PREPOSITION “from.”
  4. The DATIVE CASE was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the INDIRECT OBJECT. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITION “to.”
  5. The LOCATIVE CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITIONS “in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside.”
  6. The INSTRUMENTAL CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE and LOCATIVE cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITIONS, “by” or “with.”
  7. The ACCUSATIVE CASE was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the DIRECT OBJECT. It answered the question, “How far?” or “To what extent?”
  8. The VOCATIVE CASE was used for direct address.

## VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

- A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these CONJUNCTIONS and CONNECTORS show the direction of the author’s thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

- B. Here is a list of some of the CONJUNCTIONS and CONNECTORS and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).
1. Time connectors
    - a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) – “when”
    - b. *heōs* – “while”
    - c. *hotan, epan* (SUBJ.) – “whenever”
    - d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) – “until”
    - e. *priv* (INFIN.) – “before”
    - f. *hōs* – “since,” “when,” “as”
  2. Logical CONNECTORS
    - a. Purpose
      - (1) *hina* (SUBJ.), *hopōs* (SUBJ.), *hōs* – “in order that,” “that”
      - (2) *hōste* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) – “that”
      - (3) *pros* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) or *eis* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) – “that”
    - b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)
      - (1) *hōste* (INFINITIVE, this is the most common) – “in order that,” “thus”
      - (2) *hiva* (SUBJ.) – “so that”
      - (3) *ara* – “so”
    - c. Causal or reason
      - (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) – “for,” “because”
      - (2) *dioti, hotiy* – “because”
      - (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* – “since”
      - (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) – “because”
    - d. Inferential
      - (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* – “therefore”
      - (2) *dio* (strongest inferential CONJUNCTION) – “on which account,” “wherefore,” “therefore”
      - (3) *oun* – “therefore,” “so,” “then,” “consequently”
      - (4) *toinoun* – “accordingly”
    - e. Adversative or contrast
      - (1) *alla* (strong ADVERSATIVE) – “but,” “except”
      - (2) *de* – “but,” “however,” “yet,” “on the other hand”
      - (3) *kai* – “but”
      - (4) *mentoi, oun* – “however”
      - (5) *plēn* – “never-the-less” (mostly in Luke)
      - (6) *oun* – “however”
    - f. Comparison
      - (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce COMPARATIVE CLAUSES)
      - (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)
      - (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
      - (4) *ē* – “than”
    - g. Continuative or series
      - (1) *de* – “and,” “now”
      - (2) *kai* – “and”
      - (3) *tei* – “and”
      - (4) *hina, oun* – “that”
      - (5) *oun* – “then” (in John)
  3. Emphatic usages
    - a. *alla* – “certainty,” “yea,” “in fact”
    - b. *ara* – “indeed,” “certainly,” “really”
    - c. *gar* – “but really,” “certainly,” “indeed”
    - d. *de* – “indeed”
    - e. *ean* – “even”
    - f. *kai* – “even,” “indeed,” “really”
    - g. *mentoi* – “indeed”
    - h. *oun* – “really,” “by all means”

## VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A **CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main **VERB** does or does not occur. There were four types of **CONDITIONAL SENTENCES**. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The **FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all **FIRST CLASSES** are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The **SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
  - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
  - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
  - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The **THIRD CLASS** speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main **VERB** is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The **FOURTH CLASS** is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete **FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

## VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The **PRESENT IMPERATIVE** with **MĒ PARTICLE** often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).
- B. The **AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE** with **MĒ PARTICLE** has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The **DOUBLE NEGATIVE** with the **SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD** is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

## IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the **DEFINITE ARTICLE** "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The **DEFINITE ARTICLE** could also function
  - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative **PRONOUN**;
  - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced **SUBJECT** or person;
  - 3. as a way to identify the **SUBJECT** in a sentence with a linking **VERB**. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an **INDEFINITE ARTICLE** like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the **DEFINITE ARTICLE** could mean
  - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
  - 2. a focus on the category of something

- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the ARTICLE was employed.

## X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other TENSE, VOICE, or MOOD had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
    - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
    - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
    - c. what the author felt deeply about
  2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
    - a. for linking VERBS
      - (1) VERB
      - (2) SUBJECT
      - (3) COMPLEMENT
    - b. for TRANSITIVE VERBS
      - (1) VERB
      - (2) SUBJECT
      - (3) OBJECT
      - (4) INDIRECT OBJECT
      - (5) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
    - c. for NOUN PHRASES
      - (1) NOUN
      - (2) MODIFIER
      - (3) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
  3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
    - a. “right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship.” The phrase “right hand of fellowship” is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
    - b. “with Christ” was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
    - c. “It was bit by bit and in many different ways” (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the PRONOUN which was already present in the VERB'S inflected form. Example: “I, myself, will surely be with you. . .” (Matt. 28:20).
  2. The absence of an expected CONJUNCTION, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton (“not bound”). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
    - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
    - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
    - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
    - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
  3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
  4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
    - a. euphemisms – substitute words for taboo subjects, like “sleep” for death (John 11:11-14) or “feet” for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
    - b. circumlocutions – substitute words for God’s name, like “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:21) or “a voice from heaven” (Matt. 3:17).
    - c. FIGURES OF SPEECH
      - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
      - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)

- (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
  - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
  - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
  - (6) sound plays between words
    - (a) “church”
      - (i) “church” (Eph. 3:21)
      - (ii) “calling” (Eph. 4:1,4)
      - (iii) “called” (Eph. 4:1,4)
    - (b) “free”
      - (i) “free woman” (Gal. 4:31)
      - (ii) “freedom” (Gal. 5:1)
      - (iii) “free” (Gal. 5:1)
  - d. idiomatic language – language which is usually cultural and language specific:
    - (1) figurative use of “food” (John 4:31-34)
    - (2) figurative use of “Temple” (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
    - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, “hate” (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
    - (4) “All” versus “many.” Compare Isa. 53:6 (“all”) with 53:11 & 12 (“many”). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
  - 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: “The Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - 6. The special use of *autos*
    - a. when with the ARTICLE (attributive position) it was translated “same.”
    - b. when without the ARTICLE (predicate position) it was translated as an INTENSIVE REFLEXIVE PRONOUN—“himself,” “herself,” or “itself.”
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
- 1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
  - 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a “word-for-word” translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV) with a “dynamic equivalent” (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.
  - 3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).
  - 4. The use of a very literal translation
    - a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901
    - b. *Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.



# TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” also called “textual criticism.”
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

## I. The textual sources of our English Bible

### A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) – The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in A.D. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century A.D. and were finished in the ninth century A.D. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) – Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from “Letter of Aristeas.” The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) – The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman B.C. period (200 B.C. to A.D. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the “Essenes.” The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
  - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, “As many shall be amazed at him.”
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, “Just as many were astonished over you.”
    - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the PRONOUN distinction of the LXX is confirmed
      - (a) LXX, “so will many nations marvel at him”
      - (b) MT, “so he sprinkles many nations”
  - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, “then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand...”
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, “and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . .”
  - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify of Isa. 53:11
    - (1) LXX & DSS, “after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied”
    - (2) MT, “he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied”

### B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyrus and 268 are written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century A.D., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century A.D., but most are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.
3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter א (*aleph*) or (01), was found at St. Catherine’s monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century A.D. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as “A” or (02), is a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as “B” or (03), was found in the Vatican’s library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as “C” or (04), is a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.

7. Codex Bezae, known as “D” or (05), is a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called “The Western Text.” It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
  - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
    - (1) P<sup>75</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> (about A.D. 200), which record the Gospels
    - (2) P<sup>46</sup> (about A.D. 225), which records Paul’s letters
    - (3) P<sup>72</sup> (about A.D. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
    - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about A.D. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
    - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
    - (6) other MSS which show this text type are  $\aleph$ , C, L, W, 33
  - b. Western text from North Africa
    - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
    - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
    - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
    - (4) Codex D “Bezae” follow this text type
  - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
    - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
    - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria’s church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
    - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
    - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
  - d. the fourth possible type is “Caesarean” from Palestine
    - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
    - (2) some witnesses to it are P<sup>45</sup> and W

## II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”

### A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
  - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and, thereby, omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
    - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
    - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
  - b. slip of the ear in hand copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar sounding Greek word.
  - c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.
2. intentional
  - a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
  - b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
  - c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
  - d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
  - e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

### B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants
  - a. J. Harold Greenlee’s book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:  
 “No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original.”

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said:
- "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it. . ."
- The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central. . ."

### III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

#### A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

## **APPENDIX FOUR**

### **DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

“In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.”