



## Info for group leaders on the Gospel of

# MARK

See the background information on the general info sheet, and also the following:

### General background

*John Mark*, the author of this Gospel,<sup>1</sup> was a resident of Jerusalem before going to Antioch to work alongside Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:52). He opted out early into their *first missionary journey* and returned to Jerusalem. This provoked a disagreement between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:37-39).

About ten years later Mark appears in Paul's company again at Rome (Colossians 4:10), the rift having evidently been healed. Paul describes him to Timothy as being 'helpful to me in my ministry' (2 Timothy 4:11), and Peter—also in Rome at that time—calls Mark 'my son' (1 Peter 5:13). In fact there is some evidence that Peter was Mark's major source of material. Certainly, the fast-moving and practical nature of it fits in with what we know of Peter's character.

Mark, then, had been in the church from its very beginning, had most likely been a follower of Jesus as a young man, was a close associate of Peter and had been involved in the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome between AD 30 and 65 alongside the apostles.

### The Gospel for the Romans

Since Mark spent part of his life in Rome working with both Peter and Paul, the *Romans* were the likely recipients of his Gospel. There is other evidence within the book that supports this conclusion:

- Mark's use of the names of Roman coins (12:42)
- The explaining of Greek words by their Latin equivalents (15:16)
- The explaining of Jewish customs (7:3-4)
- The translation of Hebrew or Aramaic expressions (5:41; 7:34)
- A reference to Rufus (15:21), who according to Romans 16:31 was a resident of Rome

### The Gospel of action and reaction

The book seems to have been written with *evangelism* in mind. To that end it is a short and *simply-constructed* Gospel, designed to tell the plain truth about the person and work of Jesus. It presents Jesus as the *servant* of God (Mark 10:45). Mark records Jesus as saying that, as part of that servanthood, he would 'suffer many things' (8:31).

As a servant, Jesus came to do the will of his Father. Mark therefore majors on the *works* of Jesus rather than his words. His may be the shortest Gospel, but it records *the most miracles*. It is *full of action* and makes compelling reading as Mark takes his readers from one event to the next with great rapidity. The Greek word *euthus*, meaning 'immediately', 'at once' or 'straight away', occurs over forty times. Its use leaves the reader with the impression of Jesus moving relentlessly forward towards an unseen goal.

The Bible refers frequently to God's 'servants the *prophets*' (e.g. 2 Kings 9:7; Revelation 10:7). As God's uniquely obedient Servant, Jesus was *the Prophet*, and Mark presents him in this general light (see also 6:2-4).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark's name does not appear in his Gospel, but some scholars believe he is the young man referred to in 14:51-52, who fled naked when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus.

Alongside the action, Mark uses *vivid language to describe people's reactions* to Jesus' ministry. They are 'amazed' (1:27), critical (2:7), afraid (4:41), puzzled (6:14), 'astonished' (7:37) and bitterly hostile (14:1). Twenty-three such references reflect the popular reaction to Jesus. More than any other of the Gospel writers, Mark also notes the *slowness of the Twelve* to grasp the truth of Jesus' identity (e.g. 8:15-21; 9:30-32).

In summary, Mark's Gospel sets out to bring the person and work of Christ to a readership assumed to have no prior knowledge of theology or the Old Testament. It is integrated only by the person of Jesus and is 'the beginning of the gospel' (1:1) of which the apostolic preaching in Acts is the continuation.

The following material follows and develops the outline given in the general info sheet:

### **Introduction (1:1-13)**

'The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' (Mark 1:1)

This opening statement is a theological one: Jesus Christ is *the Son of God*. In developing it, however, there is no mention of his birth and childhood. The narrative goes straight to John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

This introduces a note of *mystery* about the person of Jesus that recurs throughout the Gospel. Mark shows various people as defective in their understanding of who Jesus was. He also emphasises Jesus' insistence that those who grasped his real identity should not proclaim it prematurely. Here's a little exercise for you as a group leader: look up the following references and note the persons and circumstances involved in Jesus' request for secrecy:

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Person and circumstances involved</b>
1:23-25	
1:33-34	
1:40-44	
5:35-43	
8:27-30	
9:2-9	

### **Early ministry in Galilee (1:14 - 3:6)**

After calling the *first disciples* (1:14-20; 2:13-17), Jesus embarks on his ministry of *healing* (1:29-34, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6) and *exorcism* (1:21-28). Very quickly the pressure of ministry impels him to find 'a solitary place' to pray (1:35-39). That pressure goes on to include *controversy* with the Pharisees over fasting and Sabbath-keeping (2:18-3:6). Their determination to kill him ends this introductory phase of his Galilean ministry.

### **Later ministry in Galilee (3:7 - 6:13)**

Jesus' fame has now spread beyond Galilee (3:8). His role is shown in this section to be *consolidated*:

- The composition of *the Twelve* is finalised (3:13-19), and he later sends them out (6:7-13) as an extension of his own ministry.
- His *teaching* is epitomised in the parables of the kingdom (4:1-34), which many hearers find it hard to understand (4:13, 33).
- His *power* demonstrated in miracles of healing and exorcism this time embraces more extreme cases, including the restoring of Legion (5:1-20) and the raising from the dead of Jairus's daughter (5:21-43).

<sup>2</sup> Some would see *Luke*, however, as more clearly portraying Jesus as a prophet. Instead, they would see Mark as highlighting some aspects of Jesus' *priestly* ministry (e.g. 12:36; 10:45; 14:24).

### **Withdrawal beyond Galilee (6:14 - 8:30)**

After the *execution of John the Baptist* (6:14-29), the Twelve return from their mission (6:30) and Jesus invites them to *withdraw* with him by boat 'to a quiet place and get some rest' (6:31).

The crowd pursues them, however, and Jesus *feeds the five thousand* (6:33-44) and, later, the *four thousand* (8:1-10). The 'bread' theme continues in his words about 'the yeast of the Pharisees (8:14-21). Most of Jesus' teaching in this section is addressed to the *disciples*, though chapter 7 is addressed partly to the Jewish religious leaders (7:1-13) and partly to 'the crowd' (7:14-15).

The disciples are still slow to understand Jesus and his message (8:21). The *healing of the blind man* by stages (8:22-26), however, is a pointer to the gradual *opening of the eyes of the disciples' understanding* to who Jesus is. Here's another little exercise for you: compare the stages of the healing of the blind man in Mark 8 with the stages in the opening of the disciples' understanding of Jesus. Complete the details in the chart below.

The Blind Man		Mark ch 8	The Disciples	
	v22	<b>The situation</b>	v27	At Caesarea Philippi Jesus asks who people say he is
'I see people...like trees walking around	v23-24	<b>Partial sight</b>	v27-28	
	v25	<b>Full sight<sup>3</sup></b>	v29	
	v26	<b>Silence commanded</b>	v30	

### **Journey to Jerusalem (8:31 - 10:52)**

Jesus is leading the Twelve towards Jerusalem. There are pointers to the stages of the journey (8:27; 9:30, 33; 10:1, 17, 32-33). It is not until 10:33, however, that Jesus makes it clear to them their ultimate destination.

Peter's confession has been a major turning point. Now, Jesus begins to speak 'plainly' about his *imminent death and resurrection* (8:31-32). His statement is repeated twice more (9:31; 10:33-34). In each case there is a three-part pattern:

Jesus speaks of his sufferings; the disciples fail to grasp it; he emphasises the necessity of suffering both for him and for his followers. See 9:31-49; 10:33-45.

### **Ministry in Jerusalem (chapters 11-13)**

This section deals with Jesus' activities in the city of Jerusalem prior to his betrayal and subsequent sufferings. Those activities take place over *three days*, in which he enters the city during the day and retires to the nearby village of Bethany in the evening:

- Day 1: The triumphal entry (11:1 and 11:11)
- Day 2: The cleansing of the temple (11:12, 15 and 11:19)
- Day 3: Teaching and controversy in the temple courts (11:20, 27 and 13:3<sup>4</sup>)

### **Suffering and death (chapters 14-15)**

These two chapters develop *themes hinted at earlier in the book*, such as the decision to seek Jesus' death (3:6), his condemnation on a charge of blasphemy (2:7) and his betrayal by Judas (3:19).

<sup>3</sup> While, in the disciples' case, this is 'full sight' relative to their previous 'blindness', it is still only partial sight relative to the complete understanding that came to them only after Jesus' resurrection. Until then, they remained confused on many aspects of Christ's identity and sufferings (e.g. 9:31-32).

<sup>4</sup> The Mount of Olives, mentioned here, is outside the city in the direction of Bethany.

Mark records Jesus as stating openly that he is the Christ—the *Messiah* (14:62), and that he is a *king* (15:1-2). Also, Mark notes the *tearing of the temple curtain* at the moment of Christ’s death and the *centurion’s acknowledgement* of him as ‘the Son of God’, which echoes the Gospel’s opening verse (15:38-39).

### **Resurrection (chapter 16)**

The climax of Mark’s Gospel is this simple account of the resurrection (16:1-8), attested by the angelic ‘young man’ (v5). It ends (v8) with, ‘...because they were afraid’—in the sense of reverential awe—a phrase with many parallels throughout the book.

The remaining verses (16:9-20) list some of Christ’s post-resurrection *appearances*, the great *commission* and the *ascension*. The Greek style of these verses is different from the rest of the book, and it is likely that this passage was a later addition— though one of great antiquity—by someone other than Mark himself. It does conform with the other Gospels, however, and we have every reason to accept its authenticity as part of the inspired text.<sup>5</sup>

## **Notes on the text**

### **Be prepared!**

The passages we are looking at in Mark are generally *longer* than the ones in previous *Diggers* series. All the more important, therefore, to prepare in advance for each session and come to it with a fair level of acquaintance with the passage.

Start each session with the group by *reading aloud through the passage to be studied*.

Don’t be bound by the breakdown of Mark’s Gospel into ten lessons. If on some occasion you find yourself only half-way through a lesson and out of time, don’t try to gallop through the remaining questions. At the next session start where you left off. Better to take 15 or even 20 sessions to get through the book than to skip part of it.

The following notes will shed light on some of the difficult issues. Read the notes carefully before each session so that you will be ready to steer the discussion along the right lines when the time comes.

### **Session 1 (1:1 – 2:28)**

After a brief introduction and reference to John the Baptist, Mark launches straight into Jesus’ baptism and public ministry. Jesus calls some of his disciples and begins his work of healing, teaching and casting out demons.

Q No.	Comments
1	The prophet <i>Elijah</i> was John’s model. John, then, clearly saw himself as a prophet. Long after Elijah’s translation to heaven, Malachi predicted the coming of another ‘Elijah figure’ (Malachi 4:5) and that, according to Jesus, was John the Baptist (Matthew 17:9-13).
4	The only different feature now concerns ‘the kingdom of God’, which is no longer ‘near’ but has actually arrived since Jesus died, rose again and ascended to heaven.
6	Demons are essentially religious in nature and will always be at home in a religious setting which is not marked by true faith and the life of the Holy Spirit.
7	Jesus was showing that he was not interested in what demons say, even when it is the truth. Neither should we be, whether it comes by horoscopes, tarot readings, clairvoyance or some other occult channel. Jesus showed his spiritual authority by silencing the demon voices.
8	Jesus got his agenda from his Father, not from the pressure of circumstances—and so should we. Also, the crowds at Capernaum probably just wanted to see some more sensational miracles rather than hear his preaching, whereas Jesus indicates that he came primarily to preach.

<sup>5</sup> The above notes are chiefly from Covenant College’s Modular Training Programme, D.Matthew, ed., 1996

10	Hopefully you did the exercise on p2 above, so you will understand that Jesus' concern for secrecy found regular expression. The reason is that if Jesus had revealed his true identity too quickly, people would have been unable to cope with it. He wanted to avoid misunderstandings that would trigger a premature and mistaken response from the people, like trying to make him a military Messiah. For that reason he revealed the nature of his person and mission little by little during the course of his ministry, finally declaring it openly.
13	Jesus could forgive sins because he <i>was</i> God—God the Son. The Jewish religious leaders, however, could hardly be expected to understand that at this early stage. At the house of Levi (another name for Matthew), these men reacted in keeping with the legalistic nature of their religion, which consisted in external observances. Jesus began to show them that <i>attitudes</i> were more important than such observances.
15	Reaping was forbidden on the sabbath (Exodus 34:21) and the Pharisees considered what Jesus and his disciples were doing to be reaping! In reply, Jesus refers to the incident recorded in 1 Samuel 21. The law stated that the consecrated bread was for the priests only (Leviticus 24:9), but God did not condemn David for giving it to his men, who were on the run and desperately hungry. The point is that real human need takes precedence over ceremonial regulations. A narrow interpretation of the law obscures the fact that God's concern is for people's practical welfare.

### Session 2 (3:1 – 4:20)

Jesus' miracles stir up controversy, but he finds comfort in the company of the Twelve, who are ratified in their appointment. Criticism comes not only from the religious leaders but also from his family. He tells and interprets the Parable of the Sower.

1	Work was forbidden by the law on the sabbath . In the opinion of the Pharisees, for Jesus to heal the man with the shrivelled hand would be for him to work as a doctor. They had no interest at all in seeing the man healed.
4	The nation of Israel consisted of twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob. By appointing twelve disciples Jesus was deliberately indicating his establishing of a new community—the church—that would supersede Israel in the purposes of God.
5	For example, Peter was a man of action, while Thomas was extremely cautious ('doubting Thomas'). Simon the Zealot was single-minded in his hatred of the Roman overlords (that is what the Zealots all were), while Matthew made money out of serious compromise with the Romans, collecting taxes for them from his fellow-Jews.
6	Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which in context is attributing to the devil what is in fact the Holy Spirit's work. Note the implication here that the Holy Spirit is God, since blasphemy by definition is to insult God himself. One commentator observes: 'In light of the context this refers to an attitude (not an isolated act or utterance) of defiant hostility toward God that rejects his saving power toward man, expressed in the Spirit-empowered person and work of Jesus. It is one's preference for darkness even though he has been exposed to light (cf. John 3:19). Such a persistent attitude of willful unbelief can harden into a condition in which repentance and forgiveness, both mediated by God's Spirit, become impossible.' <sup>6</sup>
10	Farmers were not stupid: they would throw far more seed on the field than anywhere else. Only a small proportion would fall on the path, in the rocks or among thorns. <i>Most</i> seed is expected to bear fruit!
11	We have seen from these early chapters of Mark's Gospel that Jesus' listeners fell into two categories: those who came with an attitude of openness to believing in him and those who despised and criticised him. The parables inevitably had a different effect on each group. To those who believed, including the Twelve, the parables brought fresh light and revelation, while the critics found in them just something else to criticise. The parables thus polarised existing attitudes.

<sup>6</sup> Walvoord, J. F., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

### Session 3 (4:21 – 5:43)

Jesus tells further parables. He calms the storm on Lake Galilee, then calms the storm in the life of Legion, the man possessed by multiple demons. Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from death and, on the way to her, heals the woman with a haemorrhage.

1	It is time for the light to shine—the light of the disciples' witness to Jesus Christ (v21). The secret of God's kingdom and who Jesus really is will be 'brought out into the open' by their witness (v22). The degree of attentiveness people show in receiving the word will determine the level of blessing they receive as a result (v24). The open-hearted will receive more and more revelation, while the critics will lose even what little understanding they had (v25).
2	All the farmer does is scatter the seed. The whole business of germination and growth is not his business—God sees to that! Then, when the crop is ripe, the farmer comes on the job again: now his is the pleasure of harvesting it.
3	God's kingdom began small, with just the group of disciples, but it is destined to grow very big, with thousands of millions submitting to King Jesus as the church grows throughout the world.
5	Jesus was no doubt exhausted after a long day's ministry. But his ability to sleep doubtless also came from his total trust in God and the knowledge that his time to die had not yet come.
9	In order to see this one man restored to wholeness, Jesus was happy to see a commercial enterprise written off. People are ultimately of far greater importance than things. And there will often be a material price to pay for the progress of the kingdom. [Some say that Jews shouldn't have been keeping pigs anyway. But the inhabitants of this area were largely if not entirely Gentiles.]
10	Jesus was taking a different line on publicity about his ministry. It was among Jews that Jesus was careful not to precipitate a wrong reaction in which the people might try to make him a military Messiah. The Gentiles in the Decapolis (literally 'ten towns') area where Legion lived were not Jews, so Jesus could encourage Legion to speak freely.
15	Back among Jews, Jesus is again concerned not to have too much publicity. And notice how thoroughly practical he is in asking that they give the girl something to eat.

### Session 4 (6:1 – 7:23)

Rejected by local people, Jesus sends out the Twelve on a preaching and healing mission. John the Baptist is beheaded in prison. Jesus feeds the five thousand and walks on the water of Galilee. Disputes with the Pharisees about what it means to be 'clean' and 'unclean'.

2	The disciples were to travel lightly, in keeping with the urgency of their mission, and were to depend on God to provide food and lodgings through the hospitality of local Jewish households. Jesus 'gave' them authority (v7), which clearly worked (v13).
5	Herod was almost certainly drunk. Some have pointed out that, in reality, he was merely a <i>tetrarch</i> , not a king, and strictly speaking had no kingdom to give—he was maybe just using traditional language (1 Kings 13:8) to express generosity.
10	Some background information: 'The fourth watch of the night' was from 3am to 6am. Jesus did not intend to 'pass them by' (v48) in the sense of leave them behind, but to show his glory in the way that God had sometimes done in OT times to reassure his people (see Exodus 33:19, 22; 1 Kings 19:11).
13	Jesus is saying that external observances and rituals are not what makes a person acceptable to God. What matters is the state of their heart, which will inevitably find expression in the way they act.
14	Verse 19b. The early church, especially its Jewish members, were slow to grasp this principle (see Romans 14:14; Galatians 2:11-17; Colossians 2:20-22).

### Session 5 (7:24 – 8:38)

Jesus performs two more healings: a Gentile woman's daughter and a deaf-mute. The feeding of the four thousand leads to discussion about 'the yeast of the Pharisees'. Jesus restores the sight of a blind man at Bethsaida. Peter recognises Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), after which Jesus begins to speak openly about his coming death and resurrection.

1	Jesus' main reason in being there was to get time with his disciples ('the children') to instruct them; it would not be appropriate to interrupt a family meal to feed the pet dog (the Gentile residents of this town). Or 'the children' might refer to the Jewish people and their prior claim on Jesus' time and ministry—before the opening wide of the door to Gentiles after Pentecost.
4	Jesus saw the need for this man to be away from the distraction of the crowd, so that he could focus on what Jesus was saying and doing.
6	The Pharisees came with a critical attitude 'to test him' (v11), that is, to find out if his ministry was truly authorised by God—as if his many miracles so far were not enough evidence! Jesus does not respond to such an approach. Where people come with an attitude of faith, however, he is ready to respond to a request for a miracle (e.g. 5:23; 7:26).
7	Yeast is a symbol of <i>pervasiveness</i> —it pervades a batch of dough with its influence. The Pharisees and Herod were bad influences of unbelief in Jesus, and it was a dangerously infectious attitude.
9	Jesus' feeding of the 5000 and 4000 had more significance than satisfying the crowd's physical hunger. Both miracles were pointers to his ability, as God, to satisfy <i>spiritual</i> hunger with enough and to spare (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). The slow disciples hadn't yet grasped this truth.
10	Seeing was a common metaphor for understanding. Refer back to the exercise you (hopefully) did on p3 above. After Stage 1 he was no longer totally blind, but still couldn't see clearly—just like the disciples at this stage of their walk with Jesus.
11	Up to this point there has been debate and confusion, even among the disciples, about Jesus' real identity. The question has been: Who <i>is</i> he? But with Peter's insightful confession, that issue is clarified: Jesus is the promised Christ (Messiah <sup>7</sup> ). From now on, the question will be: What <i>kind</i> of Messiah is he, and what does it mean to follow him?

### Session 6 (9:1 – 10:16)

Jesus is transfigured in the presence of Peter, James and John. Jesus expels a demon from a boy and explains why the disciples had failed to do it. Conversations between Jesus and his disciples on a variety of subjects. The subject of divorce, and Jesus' welcome for young children.

1	In the transfiguration, Peter, James and John had a preview, so to speak, of Christ's glory as King, which he would enter into fully only after his resurrection and ascension—and those events, of course, took place within the lifetime of those disciples.
2	Moses was the lawgiver and Elijah the outstanding prophet, so together these two men represented the law and the prophets, both of which testified to Jesus. Their presence confirmed that he was indeed the Messiah of OT prediction.
4	He was the 'Elijah'-figure prophesied by Malachi (3:1-4; 4:5-6), who would precede the Messiah. Jesus clearly indicated that John the Baptist had fulfilled that prophecy (v13)—though the 'restores all things' of v12 suggests that another Elijah-figure may appear before Christ's return, possibly a picture of a powerful, prophetic generation of the church.
6	The disciples' failure to heal the boy probably shook his confidence in the ability of their Master

<sup>7</sup> The Greek word *Christ* and the Hebrew word *Messiah* both mean 'anointed one'.

	also. We need to avoid giving the same impression ourselves.
9	No. In Jewish thinking, hyperbole (exaggeration) is an accepted means of making a point. Jesus is saying that, as believers, we should take prompt, decisive action against whatever might draw us away from following him. <sup>8</sup>

### Session 7 (10:17 – 11:33)

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler; priorities in the kingdom of God. James and John's request provokes discussion about greatness in the kingdom. Arrival in Jerusalem. Jesus clears the temple and curses the fig-tree. Religious leaders in Jerusalem question Jesus' authority.

1	Love of money was clearly a major hindrance to this particular man's spiritual progress, which is why Jesus urged him to off-load his wealth. Other people have different hindrances and Jesus would require them to make different adjustments.
4	The two disciples seem to be anticipating a soon-to-be-established political kingdom, in which Jesus sits on a literal throne, with key officials either side of him. Regarding the 'cup' and 'baptism', the disciples take these as meaning enjoying his company and favour as his followers, but Jesus uses them in their OT sense of judgment (the cup of God's wrath) and suffering (deluged by troubles). James and John hadn't yet understood that, in Christ's kingdom, glory only follows suffering, as Jesus had indicated would be his own pathway in 10:33-34.
7	Jesus appears to have been deliberately aligning himself and his actions with Zechariah's prophecy of the Messiah—just as John the Baptist had modelled himself on Elijah (Mark 1:6).
9	'In Palestine fig trees produced crops of small edible buds in March followed by the appearance of large green leaves in early April. This early green "fruit" (buds) was common food for local peasants. (An absence of these buds despite the tree's green foliage promising their presence indicated it would bear no fruit that year.) Eventually these buds dropped off when the normal crop of figs formed and ripened in late May and June, the fig season. Thus it was reasonable for Jesus shortly before Passover (mid-April) to expect to find something edible on that fig tree even though it was not the season for figs.' <sup>9</sup>
10	The tree's general appearance—green foliage—suggested life and the likelihood of fruit, but closer examination showed it to be devoid of fruit. This mirrored Israel's spiritual barrenness, which was in spite of the impressive outward appearance of the nation's religion, especially in the temple at Passover time. The withering of the tree following Jesus' 'curse' on it (v21) foreshadowed the judgment of God that would come on Jerusalem and its religion in AD 70. <sup>10</sup> (Note how Mark splits his account of the fig-tree incident, putting the clearing of the temple between the two parts—his way of showing that the two are connected.)
13	The leaders' motive for asking the question was a devious one—they wanted to trick Jesus into saying something for which they could condemn him. Because of their motive, Jesus didn't consider them worthy of a straight answer. We, too, need to discern the motives of people who ask us apparently serious questions about the Christian faith: do they <i>really</i> want to know what they are asking?

### Session 8 (12:1 – 13:37)

The Parable of the Tenants. Jesus discusses various issues with the religious leaders and with his disciples. The poor widow's offering. The imminent judgment on Jerusalem, and the end of the world.

<sup>8</sup> One famous Christian leader, Origen (c185-254 AD), did take this literally, along with Matthew 19:12, and, because he suffered sexual temptations, castrated himself!

<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, J. F. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Mk 11:12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>10</sup> In that year, in fulfilment of Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24, Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans. The temple was looted and burnt and the city destroyed. This brought the temple-based Jewish religion to an end and set the church free from its Jewish ties to embrace people of all races.

1	The vineyard represents the Israelite nation and the tenants its religious leaders. The Master's representatives are the OT prophets, who had never been welcomed. The son is Jesus himself, who will also be rejected. The 'others' (v9) are the Gentiles.
3	The Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus into incriminating himself. If he said the Jews <i>should</i> pay taxes to Caesar, they would denounce him as being disloyal to Jewish ideals. If he said they <i>shouldn't</i> pay, they would report him to the Roman authorities. Either way, he would be in trouble.
4	In this age, where death is a constant factor, marriage is necessary to ensure the continuity of the human race. But angels live in a different sphere of existence where death is not a factor, where God himself is their focus, and where the propagation of the race is not necessary. In the age to come we will be like them. Note that the Sadducees, who raise this issue, rejected the idea of a resurrection (v18) and also the existence of angels (Acts 23:8).
5	The reference is to Exodus chapter 3. By the time of Moses at the burning bush (v26), Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been long dead. But by saying, 'I am [not was] the God of Abraham...etc' God was implying that these patriarchs were still alive in his presence—he is 'the God...of the living' (v27). Thus the Sadducees, who held that death meant total and permanent extinction, were mistaken.
7	The OT clearly prophesied that the Christ (Messiah) would be descended from David (see John 7:41-42)—his 'son' in that sense. The Jewish religious leaders expected him to be no more than that: a military and nationalistic Messiah of David's line who would throw off the Roman yoke. But Jesus quotes Psalm 110 to show that the Messiah would also be David's 'Lord'—he is therefore David's descendant and David's Lord at the same time, implying that the Messiah is both human and divine.
8	'Devour widows' houses' (v40). The teachers of the law in Jesus' day were not paid but depended on the generosity of the ordinary people they taught. Some exploited this right by leaning heavily on people of limited means, even at times taking their property.
9	Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem's temple (v1-3), which took place when the Romans sacked the city in AD 70, just 40 years after his death. He expected his disciples to be alive when it happened (v23). Indeed, the generation of Jews at the time Jesus was speaking would witness it (v30).
10	From v32 onwards Jesus is talking about his return at the end of the age—an event still future to us. The events of AD 70 were in many ways a small-scale illustration of this far greater and universal event. In sharp contrast with the earlier section, there are no signs at all to herald Christ's return.

### Session 9 (14:1-72)

A woman anoints Jesus at Bethany, pouring perfume on his head. Jesus institutes the covenant meal and predicts Peter's denial of him. Jesus prays in Gethsemane, where he is arrested to be brought before the Sanhedrin. In fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy, Peter publicly denies the Lord.

3	It commemorated the deliverance of the Israelite slaves from Egypt following the 10 <sup>th</sup> plague on Egypt—the death of the firstborn. See Exodus chapter 12.
4	From now on his followers were to remember <i>him</i> rather than the deliverance from Egypt. His blood was more effective than the blood of the Passover lamb in that it introduced the <i>new</i> covenant (v24), by which people worldwide (not just Jews) would be delivered from a worse slavery than that of Egypt, namely, slavery to sin and Satan.
11	'I am' is partly, of course, a straight answer to the high priest's question. But there is probably also an allusion here to the name I AM by which God made himself known in the OT. Jesus is claiming to be divine.
12	Ps 110:1 came up earlier in connection with Mark 12:35-37. Look at the notes there (Lesson 8 Question 7). Daniel 7:13-14 prophesied the ascension of Jesus when, having accomplished the work of redemption and risen from death, he returned to the Father to receive his kingly authority. Here in Mark 14:62 Jesus is telling his accusers that, at judgment day, they will stand

	before him as judge and thus have proof positive that his claims to be the divine Messiah and Son of God were genuine.
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### Session 10 (15:1 – 16:20)

Jesus is tried before Pontius Pilate. The crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus and his appearances to his friends.

1	'Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea AD 26-36 and is described by Josephus and Philo (ancient Jewish writers) as having had a tempestuous relationship with the Jewish people, caused by his own maliciousness and crudeness in ruling them. He was apparently finally removed from his post and sent to Rome on account of complaints by the Jews.' <sup>11</sup>
5	The charge of claiming he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days refers back to 14:57-59. Jesus had in fact earlier made such a statement, recorded in John 2:18-22, in which he referred to the temple of his body and its resurrection after three days—which the Jewish leaders completely misunderstood. <i>Could</i> Jesus have come down from the cross? See Matthew 26:52-54.
6	Yes, because Jesus was there bearing our sins and so suffered the penalty that those sins deserved, which is 'hell'—separation from God. Note also that, in his cry from the cross, Jesus was deliberately quoting Psalm 22:1. That Psalm is the prayer of a righteous man assailed by his enemies, which was exactly Jesus' situation.
7	The curtain, or 'veil', separated the Holy Place in the temple from the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies). Behind that curtain was where the presence of God was localised under the old order, and only the High Priest of Israel could go in there once a year, on the Day of Atonement, carrying blood to atone for the sins of the people. The 'tearing' of Jesus' flesh on the cross opened the way into God's presence in a radically new way, enabling all believers to draw near to him. Because the old system was now redundant and God's presence was no longer localised in the Holy of Holies, God himself tore open the curtain to mark the end of the old order and the beginning of the new. This is developed by the writer to the Hebrews in 6:19; 9:1-14; 10:19-22.
10	Peter had been most outspoken in his denial of Jesus (14:66-72), and the women could not have been blamed for thinking that the risen Lord might want nothing more to do with him. But Peter had in fact been forgiven (see 3:28) and the angel, by mentioning him separately by name, indicated that Jesus wanted to see him, as well as the other disciples, in Galilee. Hallelujah!
12	The list of signs is general, not inclusive, and these verses are not a guarantee that these things will happen every time, and certainly not at will. American snake-handling cults have missed the point, which is that believers active in the Lord's service may be spared the natural effects of snake-bite—as Paul was in Acts 28:1-6—and of poison.
13	Don't neglect this question. In fact, give it time and effort so that God's Word will have its due effect on each member of the group as a result of this final focus.

#### Note on Mark 16:9-20

The NIV has a note after v8 saying: 'The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.'

Certainly the Greek style of the section is different from the rest of the Gospel and thus seems to have come from a different source. Scholars have proposed various explanations for this which we do not need to analyse here. The following comment will be helpful:

'A view which seems to account for the relevant evidence and to raise the least number of objections is that (a) Mark purposely ended his Gospel with verse 8 and (b) verses 9-20, though written or compiled by an anonymous Christian writer, are historically authentic and are part of the New Testament canon (cf. similarly the last chapter of Deut.). In this view, very early in the transmission of Mark's Gospel (perhaps shortly after A.D. 100) verses 9-20 were added to verse 8 without any attempt to match Mark's vocabulary and style. Possibly these verses were brief extracts from the post-Resurrection accounts found in the other three Gospels and were known

<sup>11</sup> L.W. Hurtado, *Mark*, Good News Bible Commentary, Pickering, 1984, p250

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through oral tradition to have the approval of the Apostle John who lived till near the end of the first century. Thus the material was included early enough in the transmission process to gain recognition and acceptance by the church as part of canonical Scripture. These verses are consistent with the rest of Scripture. The development of the theme of belief and unbelief unifies the passage.<sup>12</sup>

END

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<sup>12</sup> Walvoord, J. F. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Mk 16:9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.