

torturous death by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans as an insurrectionary. In Jesus' exorcisms, moreover, God is winning the struggle with Satan and the demonic "unclean spirits" (1.27; 5.10–12) that have taken possession of the people like an occupying Roman legion. Surprisingly, a conflict between Jesus and the very disciples he designates as representative of the renewed people of Israel also develops in the course of the story. Although Jesus teaches them the mystery of the kingdom, they persistently fail to understand what he is teaching and doing, and at the end they betray, deny, and desert him. By contrast with the misunderstanding and faithless disciples, women, who play an increasingly prominent role in Mark's story, serve as models of faithfulness.

The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus' preaching and manifestation of the kingdom of God as a decisive new development in the history of Israel, not as the beginning of a new religion. Indeed, in this story religion is inseparable from the social, political, economic, even the physiological aspects of life. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is portrayed in terms of popular Israelite memories of the great prophets, especially Moses, who had led Israel's Exodus from subjection to alien rule in Egypt; Elijah, who had led the renewal of Israel in resistance to oppressive monarchs; and Jeremiah, who had proclaimed God's judgment on the Temple and the rulers based there. At the beginning, in the middle, and toward the end, Mark also presents Jesus as a specially designated son of God, or king. Jesus, however, turns out to be a messiah (anointed one) who is a martyr, in contrast to the disciples' expectations that Jesus would be invested with political power in Jerusalem. And Jesus' role as both prophet and martyr-messiah is pointedly distinguished from the expectations of the Jewish elite, such as the scribes (see esp. 9.11–13; 12.35–37).

GUIDE TO READING

Because the Gospel presents a sustained narrative of escalating conflicts, it should be read as a whole so its components are understood in their connection with the overall story—a story that did not end at the tomb, as the prophecy of a new encounter between Jesus and his disciples reminds the audience (14.27–28; 16.7).

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1 The beginning of the good news^a of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^b

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,^c
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead
of you,^d

who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the
wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

⁴ John the baptizer appeared^e in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all

^a Or *gospel*

^b Other ancient authorities lack *the Son of God*

^c Other ancient authorities read *in the prophets*

^d *Gk before your face*

^e Other ancient authorities read *John was baptizing*

1.1–13: Preparing the way of the Lord. 1: In the context of the Roman Empire, *the good news* (gospel) of Jesus Christ, i.e., Jesus the “anointed” king of Israel, a people subject to Rome, would have been understood over against the “gospel” of Caesar as the “Savior” who brought peace to the world. *Son of God* is missing in the earliest manuscripts.

1.2–8: John's baptism of repentance (Mt 3.1–12; Lk 3.1–20; Jn 1.6–15, 19–28) preparing the *way* as the new Exodus and covenant renewal. 2–3: See Ex 23.20; Mal 3.1 (cf. Mt 11.10; Lk 7.27); Isa 40.3. That this is not all a quotation from Isaiah suggests that it is rooted in a popular (non-scribal) oral conflation of “prophecies.” It is not clear whether *my messenger ahead of you* refers to John sent ahead of Jesus, or Jesus sent ahead of the addressees. “*Prepare the way of the Lord*” proclaims a new Exodus, as in Isa 40. The *wilderness*, also suggestive of a new Exodus, was a place where other popular prophets and movements often originated (e.g., Acts 5.36; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.5.1). 4–5: Acts 13.24. *Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*, John proclaims and performs a ritual of entrance into God's renewed covenant with Israel in which those ready to change their ways are baptized as forgiven for having broken the covenantal laws. 5: *The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem*, i.e., all the people of Israel, from the capital city as well as from the villages, were baptized. 6: John's garb evokes an image of the prophet Elijah, as in 2 Kings 1.8; cf. 9.11–13. Jesus is also taken to be Elijah in 6.15; 8.28; 15.35–36. 7–8: John also proclaims *one . . . more powerful* who will bring the enabling divine power of the *Holy Spirit*.

the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with^a water; but he will baptize you with^a the Holy Spirit."

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;^b with you I am well pleased."

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^c of God,^d ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has

come near;^e repent, and believe in the good news."^c

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an

^a Or *in*

^b Or *my beloved Son*

^c Or *gospel*

^d Other ancient authorities read *of the kingdom*

^e Or *is at hand*

1.9–11: Jesus' baptism (Mt 3.13–17; Lk 3.21–22; Jn 1.29–34). Jesus himself is baptized into the renewal movement that began before him. *From Nazareth of Galilee*, a small village about 25 km (16 mi) west of the Sea of Galilee in the district now governed by "King" Herod Antipas (see 6.14), son of Herod the Great. 10–11: *The heavens torn apart*, as the divine *Spirit* breaks through empowering Jesus as the anointed king of Israel. A traditional designation for the king was "son of God," as in 2 Sam 7.14; Pss 2.7; 89.26 (cf. Lk 9.35). *Beloved*, cf. Isa 42.1.

1.12–13: Jesus' testing (cf. the particular "temptations" added in Mt 4.1–11; Lk 4.1–13). Jesus undergoes a forty-day time of trial and testing in the wilderness for a prophet, such as Elijah in 1 Kings 19.8; cf. Ex 24.18. The battle against Satan (see 3.23–27) is already engaged.

1.14–3.35: Proclaiming and manifesting the kingdom of God as the renewal of Israel, over against the Jerusalem priestly rulers.

1.14–15: Jesus' opening proclamation of the kingdom of God (Mt 4.12–17; Lk 4.14–15). **14: John was arrested** (see 6.17) indicates the ominous situation as Jesus begins his mission centered in Galilee, a remote area of a country subjected to Rome. **15: A summary of Jesus' program and of the Gospel according to Mark.** At the right time, in fulfillment of long-standing yearnings and hopes, God is finally acting to reestablish his beneficent will for the people. *Repent*, return to God's way, in response to the good news of God's action.

1.16–20: Call of disciples (Mt 4.18–22; Lk 5.1–11; Jn 1.35–42). *Sea of Galilee* or the Lake of Gennesaret is a large lake in a deep basin mostly surrounded by high hills. *Simon*, also called Peter (3.16).

1.21–28: Exorcism and teaching with authority (Mt 7.28–29; Lk 4.33–37). **21–22: Capernaum**, a village at the north of the Lake, is the base of Jesus' activity in Galilee and the surrounding areas. *The synagogue* is the village assembly, here gathering on the sabbath (when Jesus performs the ensuing exorcism); at this time village assemblies apparently did not yet construct public buildings in which to gather. *His teaching* is inclusive of his healings and exorcisms, as the rest of this story indicates. *Authority*, the Greek word also means "power." *Scribes*, the literate elite of scholars-lawyers who represented the Jerusalem priestly rulers. **23: A man with an**

unclean spirit,²⁴ and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He^a commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

²⁹ As soon as they^b left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door.³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out

many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him.³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.”³⁸ He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

⁴⁰ A leper^c came to him begging him, and kneeling^d he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.”⁴¹ Moved with pity,^e Jesus^f stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made

^a Or *A new teaching! With authority he*

^b Other ancient authorities read *he*

^c The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

^d Other ancient authorities lack *kneeling*

^e Other ancient authorities read *anger*

^f Gk *he*

unclean spirit, possessed by an alien force or demon. **24:** In Mark the unclean spirits immediately recognize who Jesus is, as again in 1.34; 3.11; 5.7. *Holy One of God*, a prophet possessed of divine power, as Elisha, 2 Kings 4.9. **25–26:** The exorcism involves a violent struggle. In Pss 6.9; 68.31; 78.6; 80.16; Zech 3.2 and the War Scroll from Qumran (1QM14.9–11), the Heb equivalent of the Gk term here translated “rebuke” referred to God defeating foreign conquerors or even Satan. Jesus is defeating the alien demonic forces in battle. **27:** With v. 22 these exclamations frame Jesus’ exorcism: In contrast to the scribal “authorities,” Jesus teaches and acts with authority and power over the unclean spirits for the benefit of the people. In Jesus’ struggle against the superhuman demonic spirits his political conflict with the rulers and their scribal representatives is also engaged. **28:** From his very first exorcism, Jesus’ fame spreads rapidly throughout the region; see also 1.45; 3.7–8.

1.29–34: Healings and exorcisms (Mt 8.14–17; Lk 4.38–41). **30–31:** The first of several key healings of women in Mark; see 5.21–43. **32–34:** A Markan summary, cf. 1.39; 3.7–8. **33:** Mark often uses *city* with reference to a village. **34:** *Not permit the demons to speak*, Jesus commands the demons, who know who he is, not to make him known (see 3.12) and sometimes asks people who witness healings not to tell anyone (e.g., 1.44; 5.43; 7.36). Nevertheless, his fame spreads rapidly and widely (e.g., 1.37; 1.45; 3.7–8; 7.36). The readers of Mark, of course, like the demons, know who he is from the beginning (1.1).

1.35–39: Summary of Jesus’ activity (Mt 4.23–25; Lk 4.42–44). A Markan summary of Jesus’ program of proclaiming the kingdom of God and exorcism of demons throughout the villages of Galilee. **39:** *In their synagogues*, the Greek word means “assemblies.” Jesus’ proclamations, exorcisms, and healings take place largely in the village assemblies (see vv. 21–22n.).

1.40–45: Healing a leper (Mt 8.2–4; Lk 5.12–16). *Leper*, a person suffering from skin lesions of any sort, and interpreted in priestly sources (see Lev 13–14) as a channel of “unclean” contamination for individuals and society. **40–42:** The leper dares Jesus to declare him *clean*, and Jesus responds to the challenge, in defiance of the elaborate and costly procedures prescribed in biblical law. **41:** *Moved with pity*, some manuscripts have “with anger” (see textual note *e*), which is the more difficult, hence the preferred reading; Jesus is angry at the institutionalized procedures and prescribed offerings in the Temple necessary for the “leper” to be declared free of

clean!”⁴² Immediately the leprosy^a left him, and he was made clean.⁴³ After sternly warning him he sent him away at once,⁴⁴ saying 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.”⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus^b could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

2 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.² So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.³ Then some people^c came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,⁷ “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”⁸ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these

questions among themselves; and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’?¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.”¹² And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

¹³ Jesus^d went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them.¹⁴ As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

¹⁵ And as he sat at dinner^e in Levi’s^f house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sit-

^a The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

^b Gk *he*

^c Gk *they*

^d Gk *He*

^e Gk *reclined*

^f Gk *his*

the stigma (*clean*). **44:** Since Jesus has already made the man clean, his instructions must be intended either as a demonstrative *testimony* or “witness” against the priest and the costly offerings required by their code (Lev 14.10–32) or as a facetious remark (the now-clean man does pointedly disobey the instructions).

2.1–12: Healing paralysis and forgiveness of sins (Mt 9.1–8; Lk 5.17–26). This controversy story, which is also a healing story, begins a series of controversies in which the scribes (see 1.21–22n.) and Pharisees attack or question Jesus, whose sharp response is decisive. The scribes were the literate expert interpreters and guardians of the official law codes, the Pharisees a particular party or faction within the wider class of scribes. Both were based in the Jerusalem Temple (3.22; 7.1) and worked for and represented the priestly rulers in dealings with the people. **4:** Houses often had a flat roof consisting of mud plaster over a wood framework. **5–11:** Jesus equates the declaration “*Your sins are forgiven*” with “*Stand up . . . and walk*.” The man’s paralysis is believed to be due to his own sin (or that of his parents; see Ex 34.7; Jn 9.2). The scribes, the authorities who socially reinforced such self-blame for illness and misfortune, accuse Jesus of *blasphemy*, a capital offense (Lev 24.16), since forgiveness can be done by *God alone* through the established procedures in the Temple, according to these his official interpreters. The accusation prefigures that by the high priest at his trial (Mk 14.64). Again Jesus asserts his own prophetic authority and power over against the scribes, as in 1.22–27. *Son of Man* means either “human being” or refers to Jesus as an exalted figure representative of a finally restored Israel (derived from Dan 7.13), or both.

2.13–17: Eating with sinners (Mt 9.9–13; Lk 5.27–32). **14:** *Levi*, identified as “Matthew” in Mt 9.9, is a customs officer at Capernaum, a border village, presumably working under an officer of Herod Antipas. **15–16:** *Eating with sinners and tax collectors* (or rather “toll collectors”) would have entailed contact with impure people and social outcasts, according to *the scribes of the Pharisees*.

ting^a with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of^b the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why does he eat^c with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

¹⁸ Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people^d came and said to him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁹ Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

²¹ “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”^e

²³ One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” ²⁵ And

he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? ²⁶ He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.” ²⁷ Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; ²⁸ so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

3 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” ⁴ Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵ He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

^a Gk *reclining*

^b Other ancient authorities read *and*

^c Other ancient authorities add *and drink*

^d Gk *they*

^e Other ancient authorities lack *but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins*

2.18–22: Fasting (Mt 9.14–17; Lk 5.33–39). **19:** A wedding feast, one of the principal times of celebration and feasting among peasants, was a traditional symbol of the future time of fulfillment, a time of justice and plenty; cf. Isa 62.5; Lk 17.22. **20:** *The bridegroom . . . taken away*, after the crucifixion when Jesus, understood as the bridegroom, is gone. **21–22:** With Jesus’ preaching and manifestation of the kingdom something new has come, calling for suspension of old forms such as fasting.

2.23–28: The sabbath and hunger (Mt 12.1–8; Lk 6.1–5). **23–24:** The disciples’ action may have violated the Pharisees’ restrictions against travel as well as harvesting on the sabbath, meant to implement the fourth commandment (Ex 20.8–10). **25–26:** Jesus’ reply summarizes a story about David commandeering food for his soldiers that appears in 1 Sam 21.1–6, in which Ahimelech, Abiathar’s father, is the priest (cf. 2 Sam 15.35). The point of the story: David’s men were *hungry*, a detail not found in 1 Sam 21. **27:** Ex 23.12; Deut 5.14–15. **28:** *Son of Man*, even more clearly than in 2.10, could mean either “human being,” in parallelism with “humankind” in v. 27, or the future Jesus as an exalted figure representing a renewed Israel.

3.1–6: Healing on the sabbath (Mt 12.9–14; Lk 6.6–11). **1:** *Synagogue*, see 1.21–22n. **2–4:** Having already performed an exorcism on the sabbath (1.22–27), Jesus now pointedly performs a healing on the sabbath in the presence of the Pharisees, who remain silent. **5:** Juxtaposition of Jesus’ anger and grief at the Pharisees’ program and his compassion in curing the man’s withered hand. **6:** In response to this and Jesus’ previous actions, the Pharisees conspire with the *Herodians*, representatives of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, *to destroy him*.

3.7–12: Summary of Jesus’ activity (Mt 4.24–25; 12.15–21; Lk 6.17–19; 4.41). A summary of Jesus’ program and

⁷ Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; ⁸ hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹ He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; ¹⁰ for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, "You are the Son of God!" ¹² But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

¹³ He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles,^a to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ So he appointed the twelve:^b Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Then he went home; ²⁰ and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." ²³ And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— ³⁰ for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

^a Other ancient authorities lack *whom he also named apostles*

^b Other ancient authorities lack *So he appointed the twelve*

the burgeoning response it evokes. **8:** Peoples of Israelite heritage from all these areas flock to Jesus, indicating that a renewal of all Israel is happening. *The region around* indicates that they are mainly from rural villages. See map on p. 1800.

3.13–19a: Appointing the twelve (Mt 10.1–4; Lk 6.12–16). **13–14:** *Up the mountain . . . appointed twelve*, suggests a new Sinai, on which Jesus is constituting a renewed Israel symbolized by the twelve. **14–15:** The twelve are invested with the same proclamation (of the kingdom) and authority and power to exorcize demons as Jesus, an extension of his program.

3.19b–35: Defeat of Satan, and the new community (Mt 12.22–27; Lk 11.14–23; 12.10; 16.43–45). In a repeated narrative technique, Mark "sandwiches" one story into another. **21:** To those who knew Jesus before he assumed the role of prophet or are concerned lest he be seized by the authorities, he appears to be *out of his mind* (cf. 6.1–3). **22–27:** Both Jesus and the scribes (see 1.21–22n.) think that current personal and social-political life is caught in the struggle for dominion between God and Satan. **22:** The threatened scribes attribute Jesus' power to demonic possession: He is a witch! *Beelzebul*, possibly "Lord of the (divine) house" (cf. Mt 10.25), or "Baal, the prince," originally a title of the Canaanite storm and fertility god (2 Kings 1.2), later demonized into the chief power of evil. **23:** *In parables*, in extended metaphors or analogies; cf. 4.2,33. **24–26:** A kingdom was thought of as a household on a large scale, and both kingdom and household were metaphors for God's and Satan's power or control. Jesus argues both that the scribes' charge is absurd and that even assuming they are right, Satan's rule is at an end. **27:** By analogy, in his exorcism of demons Jesus (the "more powerful one," 1.7) has broken into Satan's house, tied up "the strong man," and "plundered his property." This further implies that God's is now the only kingdom left, by which Jesus is acting. **28–30:** From Mark's viewpoint, attacks on Jesus during his mission can be forgiven, but not attacks against the *Holy Spirit* acting in his movement. **31–35:** Not necessarily an attack on his family (but see v. 21), but rather an indication that within the Jesus-movement and its communi-

³¹Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters^a are outside, asking for you.” ³³And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

4 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³“Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” ⁹And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

¹⁰When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret^b of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; ¹²in order that

‘they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.’”

¹³And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.^c ¹⁸And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²⁰And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

²¹He said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? ²²For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. ²³Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” ²⁴And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you

^a Other ancient authorities lack *and sisters*

^b Or *mystery*

^c Or *stumble*

ties, those who do *the will of God* are Jesus’ and each others’ *brother and sister and mother*.

4.1–34: Teaching the mystery of the kingdom of God in parables (Mt 13; Lk 8.4–18; 13.18–21). **2:** *In parables*, in extended metaphors or analogies. **3–8:** Parable of the sower and the seeds. Despite all the obstacles, there is an amazing and unprecedented bumper crop (normal good yield was 7 to 1). **10:** The rest of the teaching is directed to the twelve (3.16–19) and other members of the movement. **11–12:** *The secret of the kingdom of God*, to them is disclosed the “mystery” or hidden plan of God (cf. Dan 2.28) for the fulfillment of history in the kingdom of God now being proclaimed and manifested. Since outsiders do not understand this “mystery” or “plan,” the parables are opaque to them, just as Isaiah’s contemporaries did not understand his prophecies (Isa 6.9–10). **13–20:** Explains the parable of the sower allegorically, with each principal symbol of the analogy standing for some aspect of the listeners’ experiences of the effects of Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom—and corresponding to later episodes in Mark. **15:** The struggle with Satan continues, as it also will in Peter’s misunderstanding in 8.29–33. **16–17:** Cf. 9.42–48; 13.19,24; 14.27,29. **18–19:** *The lure of wealth*, cf. 10.17–22,25. **21–23:** These sayings repeat and reinforce the message of 4.3–10,20; the kingdom, *hidden now*, will *come to light*. **24–25:** These sayings make most sense as a warning not to accept any cynical “realistic” advice that the established power-relations

get, and still more will be given you.²⁵ For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”

²⁶ He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it;³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him.³⁷ A great wind-storm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

5 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.^{a 2} And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him.³ He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain;⁴ for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him.⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones.⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him;⁷ and he shouted at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”⁸ For he had said to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”⁹ Then Jesus^b asked him, “What is your

^a Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; others, *Gadarenes*

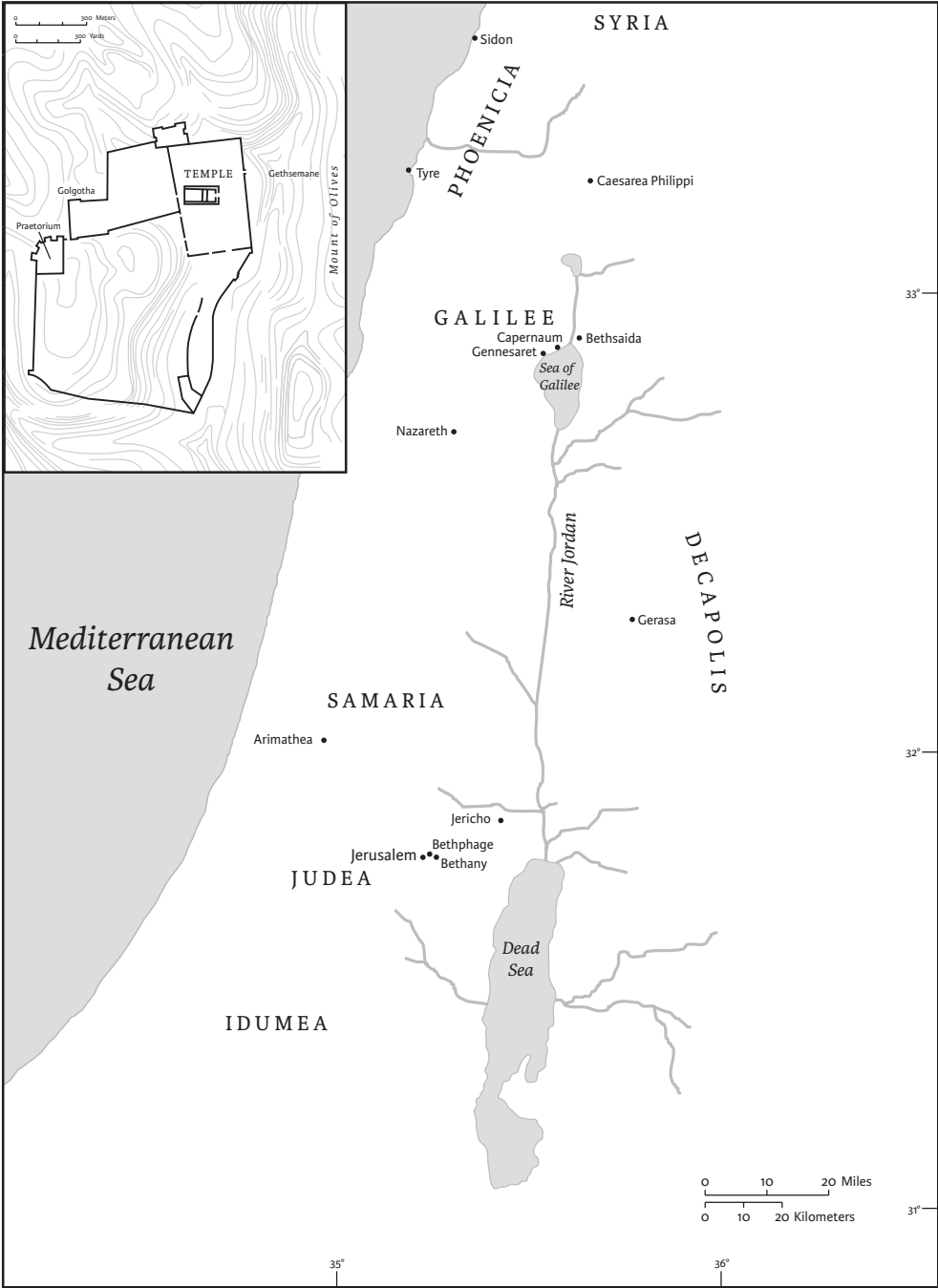
^b Gk *he*

will inevitably continue. **26–29:** The kingdom of God will surely come to full fruition, just as the seed inevitably sprouts, grows, and produces a harvest (cf. Joel 3.13). **30–32:** The climax of the process by which the kingdom of God is growing is like the tiniest seed producing a large bush that provides homes for the birds. Note the modest metaphor, in contrast with the imperial metaphor of the cedar tree in Ezek 17; 31; Dan 4.

4.35–8.21: Continuing the prophetic renewal of Israel (and other peoples) despite opposition and the disciples’ misunderstanding. This section is organized around two sequences of Moses- and Elijah-like sea crossings, exorcisms, healings, and wilderness feedings.

4.35–41: First sea crossing (Mt 8.18, 23–27; Lk 8.22–25; cf. Mk 6.45–52). Emphasis falls on the disciples’ lack of faith and their *great awe* . . . “*that even the wind and the sea obey him*.” Control of the sea is a divine characteristic (e.g., Job 26.12; 38.8–11; see Ps 89.9; cf. Ps 89.25).

5.1–20: Exorcism of the demon whose name is “Legion” (Mt 8.28–34; Lk 8.26–39). This is the most embellished such episode in Mark. **1:** The territory of the city of Gerasa (modern Jerash) was in central Transjordan; its population was largely non-Jewish. Mt 8.28 situates this event in Gadara, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, a setting that better fits the narrative. **2–5:** The man’s possession by the alien force generated such violence that his community had not been able to restrain him, even with chains. **7: Most High God** is not an Israelite but a Hellenistic name, found mainly in Luke-Acts. **9:** Once the unclean spirit is cast out, it is possible to find



The geography of the Gospel of Mark.

name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many."¹⁰ He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.¹¹ Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding;¹² and the unclean spirits^a begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them."¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened.¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid.¹⁶ Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it.¹⁷ Then they began to beg Jesus^b to leave their neighborhood.¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him.¹⁹ But Jesus^c refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat^d to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea.

²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him,

fell at his feet²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'"³² He looked all around to see who had done it.³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

^a Gk *they*

^b Gk *him*

^c Gk *he*

^d Other ancient authorities lack *in the boat*

out its identity. A *legion* was a division (usually consisting of about five or six thousand troops) of the Roman military, who had conquered and, in effect, still occupied the country. 11–13: Having entered the herd of pigs (which Jews were not permitted to eat, Lev 11.7; Deut 14.8), the Roman "legion" of unclean spirits, in a military image, charged into the sea and were destroyed, alluding to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in Israel's Exodus deliverance (Ex 15.4). Cf. the image of the (Temple-) mount "thrown into the sea," 11.23. 14–17: The people were apprehensive that Jesus had disrupted their delicately balanced adjustment to the alien possession. 20: The liberated man carried the good news about Jesus' actions into the wider *Decapolis*, the district of "ten cities" in the Jordan valley and in Transjordan. They were Hellenistic in character, with a largely non-Israelite population.

5.21–43: **Healings of Jairus's daughter and the hemorrhaging woman** (Mt 9.18–26; Lk 8.40–56). Again (see 3.19b–25) Mark has "sandwiched" one story into another. The healings of both the woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years and the almost dead twelve-year-old woman are also symbolic of Jesus' renewal of Israel. 22: *Leaders of the synagogue*, i.e., of the village assembly. 25–26: The woman is poverty-stricken from the worsening hemorrhaging that no physicians could stop. According to the official Jerusalem purity code (Lev 15.25–30), she would have been "unclean." It is doubtful that this code affected village life. The story itself does not mention ritual purity. 27–33: The initiative and action are entirely hers, Jesus being the passive conduit through which the healing power goes forth. 34: Her confidence that she would be healed is a paradigm of trust

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing^a what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

6 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ² On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary^b and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense^c at him. ⁴ Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in

their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." ⁵ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷ He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹ but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." ¹² So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³ They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus^d name had become known. Some were^e saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

^a Or *ignoring*; other ancient authorities read *hearing*

^b Other ancient authorities read *son of the carpenter and of Mary*

^c Or *stumbled*

^d Gk *his*

^e Other ancient authorities read *He was*

(*faith*) in the renewal that is happening through Jesus. **41:** The phrase *talitha cum* is Aramaic; cf. 7.34; 14.36; 15.34. **42:** The young woman, at twelve approaching marriage, appears to be dead, yet Jesus restores her to life and, presumably, the ability to reproduce new life in and of Israel.

6.1–6a: Rejection in his hometown (Mt. 13.53–58; Lk 4.16–30). Those who knew Jesus from his early years, before he was called into service as a prophet mediating extraordinary powers, cannot respond in faith as others can; cf. 3.21. **5:** The powers that work through such a prophet are dependent on people's positive response with faith.

6.6b–13: Commissioning the twelve (Mt 10.1,9–11,14; Lk 9.1–6; cf. Lk 10.2–16). Jesus commissions the twelve, appointed as symbolic heads of the renewed Israel in 3.13–19, to expand his mission of proclamation, exorcism, and healing. They work in villages, staying in sympathetic households, building the renewal movement.

6.14–29: Herod's execution of John (Mt 14.1–12; Lk 9.7–9). **14–16:** *Herod*, Antipas, son of Herod the Great, technically appointed tetrarch, but popularly known as "King," ruled Galilee and part of Transjordan 4 BCE–39 CE. Clearly people were responding to and identifying Jesus out of their cultivation of popular tradition as "Elijah" or "one of the prophets." Herod, however, is anxiously superstitious because he had beheaded John.

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod^a had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed;^b and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²² When his daughter Herodias^c came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³ And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵ Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's^d head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard about

it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." ³⁷ But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii^e worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and

^a Gk *he*

^b Other ancient authorities read *he did many things*

^c Other ancient authorities read *the daughter of Herodias herself*

^d Gk *his*

^e The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

17–29: A popular tale of the decadent life at Herod's court and of the gruesome beheading of John that sounds an ominous note for Jesus' prophetic renewal of Israel over against the king appointed by Rome. **17–18:** Royal marriages were instruments of international politics. John's prophecy against Herod Antipas's marriage to his brother's wife, which was illegal (Lev 18.16; 20.21) and which alienated the Nabatean king Aretas IV, father of his first wife, was politically incendiary (see Josephus, *J.W.* 2.182; *Ant.* 18.240–44). **19–20:** Herod's and Herodias's respective feelings about John are reminiscent of Ahab's and Jezebel's stances toward Elijah in 1 Kings 18–19, 21. **21:** *Leaders*, better "the first ones," i.e., high-ranking officials at court. **22:** *His daughter*, called Salome by Josephus (*Ant.* 18.5.136). **29:** John also had disciples, and perhaps headed a prophetic movement parallel to that of Jesus.

6.30–44: *Wilderness feeding of five thousand* (Mt 14.13–21; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–13; cf. Mk 8.1–10). First of two wilderness feedings reminiscent of God's feeding early Israel in the wilderness through Moses (Ex 16; Num 11). **30–33:** In need of a temporary retreat from the rigors of their mission, Jesus and his apostles withdraw, but hordes of people clamor to them even in the wilderness. **34:** *Sheep without a shepherd*, a frequent image for a people without a prophet or king to lead them (see Num 27.17; 1 Kings 22.17; Ezek 34.8; Zech 10.2). Coming right after Herod's execution of John, it also alludes to the prophetic tradition of political criticism of predatory and exploitative kings who become rich by "fleeing" rather than caring for their people (see Ezek 34.2–5; Zech 11.4–17). **35–37:** The disciples' suggestion and protest both represent a misunderstanding of Jesus' program. That the villagers could no longer feed themselves from their own produce and had to become laborers to earn

see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And all ate and were filled; ⁴³ and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

⁴⁷ When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.

⁴⁸ When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. ⁴⁹ But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.

⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵ and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

7 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, ² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands,^a thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it;^b and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.^c) ⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live^d according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” ⁶ He said to them, “Isaiah

^a Meaning of Gk uncertain

^b Other ancient authorities read *and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves*

^c Other ancient authorities add *and beds*

^d Gk *walk*

money to buy food is just the problem! **38–44:** One of the dreams of peasants, who are always economically marginal and therefore hungry, is a future good time when food is plentiful (cf. Lk 6.20–21). Both the multiplication of the food and the twelve baskets left over suggest that this story is reminiscent of Elijah-Elisha stories of feeding in times of famine (e.g., 2 Kings 4.42–44) and of their restoration of Israel symbolized in its twelve tribes. **39–40:** Groups of hundreds and fifties are an allusion to Moses’ organization of Israel following the Exodus (Ex 18.21–25). **41:** Christian readers usually find eucharistic overtones in Jesus’ blessing and breaking of the loaves (cf. 14.22).

6.45–52: Second sea crossing (Mt 14.22–33; Jn 6.15–21; cf. Mk 4.35–41). **45:** *Bethsaida*, a village at the north of the Sea of Galilee, transformed into a small “city” by Herod Philip. **47–52:** Again the disciples are terrified, not only at the wind but also at the apparition. **50:** Mark compares Jesus to God, using the phrase “I am” (Gk “ego eimi,” NRSV: “It is I”; cf. Ex 3.14). **51–52:** Yet the disciples not only lack faith, as in 4.40, but *their hearts were hardened*, as had occurred with enemies of God in earlier times (e.g., Ex 7.13,14; Deut 2.30; Josh 11.20; 1 Sam 6.6).

6.53–56: A summary passage highlighting the widening response to Jesus. Mt 14.34–36. **56:** *His cloak . . . were healed*, cf. 5.25–34.

7.1–23: Traditions of the elders vs. the commandment of God (Mt 15.1–20). **1–5:** As representatives of the Jerusalem Temple, the political-economic as well as religious capital of Judea, the Pharisees and scribes cultivated oral *tradition of the elders* supplementary to the law of Moses, in this story focused on purity codes for processing and eating food. **3–4:** The parenthetical explanation claims that “all the Judeans/NRSV “all the

prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;

⁷ in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

⁹ Then he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban’ (that is, an offering to God^a)— ¹² then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.”

¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”^b

¹⁷ When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ He said to them, “Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, ¹⁹ since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said,

“It is what comes out of a person that defiles.

²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

²⁴ From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.^c He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice,²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁸ But she answered him, “Sir,^d even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” ³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapo-

^a Gk lacks to God

^b Other ancient authorities add verse 16, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen”

^c Other ancient authorities add and Sidon

^d Or Lord; other ancient authorities prefix Yes

Jews”), not just the Pharisees, observed their hand-washing regulations. 6–8: In reply, quoting Isa 29.13 (LXX), Jesus claims that the Pharisees in effect replace the basic covenantal *commandment of God* with their merely *human tradition*. 9–13: Jesus focuses the dispute in concrete terms on the *commandment of God* concerning *Honor your father and your mother* (cf. Ex 20.12; 21.17), which includes economic support in their declining years. He claims that the Pharisees make it void with their *tradition of Corban*, encouraging people to dedicate the produce of their land to the Jerusalem Temple—thus siphoning off produce that otherwise could have been used to support parents. *Corban* is an Aramaic word meaning “offering dedicated (to God).” 14–19a: Addresses purity codes with a touch of earthy humor regarding eating and resultant bodily functions. 17: *Parable* here has the sense of “riddle.” 19b: Perhaps a later addition to the text. 20–23: Shifts the focus from bodily functions to the inner motivations of “defiling,” socially destructive behavior.

7.24–30: **The Syrophenician woman** (Mt 15.21–28). 24–26: In *the region of Tyre*, not in the city itself, a “Greek” woman intrudes with her plea on behalf of her possessed daughter. 27–28: To Jesus’ insistence that the manifestation of the kingdom (*food*) is primarily for Israelites (*children*), she gives a reply that wins the debate. 29–30: The representative figure of the peoples surrounding Israel insists on receiving the benefits of the kingdom, and her insistence produces precisely that.

7.31–37: **Healing the deaf** (Mt 15.29–31). Healing the deaf-mute, which is symbolic of a more general restoration of hearing and speech, confirms that the kingdom of God and the movement of renewal has extended to

lis.³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him.³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue.³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.³⁶ Then Jesus^a ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

8 In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them,² “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.³ 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.”⁴ His disciples replied, “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?”⁵ He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.”⁶ Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd.⁷ They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed.⁸ They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets

full.⁹ Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.¹⁰ And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.^b

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him.¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.”¹³ And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side.

¹⁴ Now the disciples^c had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.¹⁵ And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.”^d ¹⁶ They said to one another, “It is because we have no bread.”¹⁷ And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?¹⁸ Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember?¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” They said to him, “Twelve.”²⁰ “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” And they said to him, “Seven.”²¹ Then he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

^a Gk *he*

^b Other ancient authorities read *Mageda* or *Magdala*

^c Gk *they*

^d Other ancient authorities read *the Herodians*

the peoples round about Israel. **34:** The word *ephphatha* is Aramaic; see 5.41n.

8.1–9: Wilderness feeding of four thousand (Mt 15.32–38; cf. Mk 6.30–44). As he had fed the earlier crowd in the wilderness, implicitly composed of Israelites, now Jesus also feeds the surrounding peoples in the wilderness. *Seven* is symbolic of the surrounding peoples, as twelve was of Israel (6.43). The two wilderness feedings echo the two accounts of the giving of food to the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 16; Num 11).

8.10–12: No sign will be given (Mt 16.1–4; 12.28–39; Lk 11.29; 11.16; 12.54–56). This passage would make better sense if v. 10 were in one paragraph with vv. 11–12, and v. 13 were joined to the following paragraph (vv. 14–21). Blind to the sequences of Moses- and Elijah-like actions Jesus has just taken, the Pharisees again press Jesus, asking *for a sign from heaven, to test him*, which they do again in 10.2 and 12.15. **10: Dalmanutha**, the parallel in Mt 15.39 reads “Magadan” (see note there).

8.13–21: The disciples misunderstand (Mt 16.4–12; Lk 12.1). In a bridge to the next section, the disciples simply do not understand what is happening, either the scheming of the religious and political authorities seeking to destroy Jesus (cf. 3.6) or the renewal movement underway among the surrounding peoples as well as among Israelite villages. **17–18:** 4.9–12; 6.52. **19:** 6.41–44. **20:** 8.5–8.

²² They came to Bethsaida. Some people^a brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” ²⁴ And the man^b looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” ²⁵ Then Jesus^b laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”^c

²⁷ Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”^d ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this

quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,^e will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words^f in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed

^a Gk *They*

^b Gk *he*

^c Other ancient authorities add *or tell anyone in the village*

^d *Or the Christ*

^e Other ancient authorities read *lose their life for the sake of the gospel*

^f Other ancient authorities read *and of mine*

8.22–10.52: Jesus confirms and continues his prophetic role in the renewal of Israel while announcing his agenda as martyr-messiah to the misunderstanding disciples.

8.22–26: Healing of a blind man (Jn 9.1–7). This restoration of a blind man's sight and that of Bartimaeus in 10.46–52 frame this part of Mark in which the disciples are “blind” to what is said and done.

8.27–33: Jesus' first announcement and Peter's misunderstanding (Mt 16.13–23; Lk 9.18–22). **27:** *The villages of Caesarea Philippi*, villages subject to Herod Philip in the northernmost area of (formerly) Israelite territory. **28:** Again, not surprisingly given his program, Jesus is popularly understood as Elijah, one of the prophets, or even John. **29–30:** There is very little evidence for expectations of “the messiah,” which was hardly standardized at the time. The role and title *the Messiah* would fit Jesus' subsequent actions (e.g., in 11.2–10) and statements about him, but not his previous actions in Mark. **31:** The translation softens a key Greek term: “it is necessary that . . .,” i.e., in God's plan, given the historical situation. *The Son of Man*, meaning “human being” or the future figure representing a restored Israel, or both (see 2.10n.), is clearly Jesus' self-reference. This is the first of three clear announcements that “it is necessary” that he be condemned by the rulers, be killed, and rise again (see 9.31–32; 10.32–34). **32–33:** Following Peter's rebuke (presumably about having to be killed), Jesus in turn rebukes Peter in startling terms, contrasting the purpose or will of God for human beings with the purposes those human beings would have for themselves. Jesus will be a martyr-messiah.

8.34–9.1: The cost of following Jesus (Mt 16.24–28; Lk 9.23–27; cf. Mt 10.28–33; Lk 12.4–9). Pointedly telling *the crowd* to join the *disciples*, Jesus warns that, like himself, his followers must also be prepared to suffer martyrdom for the gospel, the cause of the kingdom. **34:** *Take up their cross*, the Romans used crucifixion as a gruesome means of terrorizing subject peoples by hanging rebels and agitators from crosses for several days until they suffocated to death. They required condemned provincials to carry the crossbeam on which they were about to be hung. **38:** How the followers stand toward Jesus and his gospel when facing trial will determine how the Son of Man will stand toward them when, in God's final condemnation of the oppressive empire,

when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”¹ And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with^a power.”

² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them,³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one^b on earth could bleach them.⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,^c one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved;^d listen to him!”⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.¹⁰ So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.¹¹ Then they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”¹² He said to them, “Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that

he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt?”¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him.”

¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.¹⁵ When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him.¹⁶ He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?”¹⁷ Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak;¹⁸ and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.”¹⁹ He answered them, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.”²⁰ And they brought the boy^e to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy,^e and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.²¹ Jesus^f asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

^a Or *in*

^b Gk *no fuller*

^c Or *tents*

^d Or *my beloved Son*

^e Gk *him*

^f Gk *He*

he comes in judgment as well as restoration of the people (cf. Mk 13.26–27; 14.62; Dan 7.13–14). **9.1:** *The kingdom of God will come with power* already during their lifetime.

9.2–8: Transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17.1–8; Lk 9.28–36). **2–4:** The mountain setting is reminiscent of Moses and the elders of Israel on Sinai (Ex 24). *Transfigured . . . dazzling white*, in the disciples’ visionary experience, Jesus appears as a vindicated martyr (see Dan 11.36; Rev 3.5,18; 4.4; 6.9–11; 7.9,13–14), linked to what he had just told the disciples in 8.31. With him are Elijah and Moses, the prophetic restorer and founder of Israel, respectively, whose great actions of deliverance Jesus’ actions, just performed in 4.35–8.26, resemble. **5–6:** Peter, mystified and *terrified*, addresses Jesus not as “messiah,” but as *Rabbi*, as he does again in 11.21 when he is again mystified, and as Judas does in his betrayal, 14.45. **7:** Now Peter, James, and John hear the same voice that Jesus heard at his baptism in 1.11.

9.9–13: Correction of scribal teaching about Elijah (Mt 17.9–13). **9–11:** The disciples, still not understanding the necessity of his martyrdom, remain oriented toward the teachings of the Jerusalem scribes, as in Sir 48.10 (cf. Mal 4.4–5). **12–13:** First pointing to the obvious contradiction between the official scribal teaching and what he has just told them, mockingly couching it in scribal terms as scriptural, “it is written,” he asserts that in fact Elijah has already come in John, and he was ignominiously killed.

9.14–29: Healing of epileptic child (Mt 17.14–21; Lk 9.37–42). Since Matthew and Luke have no parallels to vv. 15–16, 21–27 of this unusually elaborate story in Mark, the text may have been much shorter originally.

And he said, "From childhood.²² It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us."²³ Jesus said to him, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes."²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out,^a "I believe; help my unbelief!"²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!"²⁶ After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead."²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand.²⁸ When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"²⁹ He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."^b

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again."³² But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³ Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?"

³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest.³⁵ He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."³⁶ Then

he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them,³⁷ "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

³⁸ John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone^c casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.⁴⁰ Whoever is not against us is for us.⁴¹ For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

⁴² "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me,^d it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell,^e to the unquenchable fire.^f ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.^{e,f} ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than

^a Other ancient authorities add *with tears*

^b Other ancient authorities add *and fasting*

^c Other ancient authorities add *who does not follow us*

^d Other ancient authorities lack *in me*

^e Gk *Gehenna*

^f Verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48) are lacking in the best ancient authorities

9.30–37: Second announcement and misunderstanding (Mt 17.22–23; 18.1–5; Lk 9.43–48). Despite his teaching, again (see 8.31n.), that the Son of Man would be killed and rise again, the disciples still do not understand, as illustrated in their blithe discussion of *who was the greatest*. **36–37: A child** was the lowest-status person in a household.

9.38–41: Unknown exorcist (Lk 9.49–50). An allusion to the story in Num 11.27–29. The movement is not to be defensive or controlling.

9.42–50: Warning on discipline (Mt 18.6–9; 5.29–30; 5.13; Lk 17.1–2; 14.34–35). A series of warnings on male sexual discipline, judging from references in rabbinic literature, beginning with sexual abuse of children. **43: Hand** probably refers to prohibition of masturbation (See *Mishnah Niddah* 2.1). *Hell*, lit., "Gehenna," the valley of the son of Hinnom (2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31), symbolizing the place of eternal punishment by fire. **45: Foot** is a standard euphemism in Heb for the male genitals (Isa 6.2; 7.20), and there is probably double-entendre here.

to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,^a
⁴⁸ where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

⁴⁹ “For everyone will be salted with fire.^b
⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?^c Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

10 He left that place and went to the region of Judea and^d beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and as was his custom, he again taught them.

² Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” ⁵ But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,’^e and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

¹⁰ Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But

when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money^f to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

^a Gk *Gehenna*

^b Other ancient authorities either add or substitute *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*

^c Or *how can you restore its saltiness?*

^d Other ancient authorities lack *and*

^e Other ancient authorities lack *and be joined to his wife*

^f Gk lacks *the money*

47: *Eye* here refers to lustful gazes. 48: See Isa 66.24.

10.1–16: Marriage and children in the kingdom (Mt 19.1–15; Lk 18.15–17). 1: Jesus moves into Israelite territory beyond Galilee, now concentrating on teaching. 2–12: The first step in a series of covenantal instructions and exhortations focuses on (the commandment against) adultery (Ex 20.12; Deut 5.18), i.e., on marriage and divorce. 3–4: See Deut 24.1–4; Jer 3.8. 5–9: To the Pharisees’ focus on divorce as a male prerogative, Jesus insists upon the equality of marriage intended in the creation stories, Gen 1.27; 2.24. 10–12: Cf. Mt 5.31–32. The juxtaposition of vv. 2–9 and vv. 11–12 indicates that Jesus’ restrictive interpretation of the commandment against adultery, allowing divorce but prohibiting remarriage, was grounded in creation. Jesus’ formulation with both the man and the woman as active agents stands in contrast to the ancient assumption that adultery was an offense against the husband. 13–16: Not an idealization of childhood. Against the disciples’ restriction of access to Jesus and his movement, Jesus uses children, who occupied the lowest status in society, as a symbol for how one should receive the kingdom.

10.17–31: Egalitarian economic relations in the kingdom (Mt 19.16–30; Lk 18.18–30). An exhortation for egalitarian covenantal economic relations. 17: The man’s address is flattering and his question unusual for Mark, in which the common people have more concrete concerns. 19: Recitation of covenantal commandments, Ex 20.12–16, adding *defraud*. 21–22: Jesus’ test exposes the man as adamantly attached to his wealth, which (from the covenantal viewpoint) he might have gained by defrauding peasants by charging interest on loans, etc.,

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is^a to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ^b “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.”

²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,^c ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.

³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

³² They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen

to him, ³³ saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; ³⁴ they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.”

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹ They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus

^a Other ancient authorities add *for those who trust in riches*

^b Other ancient authorities read *to him*

^c Or *gospel*

thus also violating the commandment against stealing. **23–25:** Jesus consolidates the point just illustrated with a little proverbial peasant humor: It is impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. **26–27:** Jesus’ reply to the disciples’ incomprehension, although precisely how it connects with the previous discussion is unclear. **28–31:** To Peter’s anxious plea, Jesus’ reply is serious about the concrete restoration (houses, fields, families) but teasingly facetious as well. The obvious exaggeration about the degree is canceled out by the *persecutions*, and the promise of *eternal life in the age to come* is a throw-away line mocking the rich man’s concern (v. 17).

10.32–45: Egalitarian social-political relations in the kingdom and the third announcement and misunderstanding (Mt 20.17–28; Lk 18.31–34, 22.24–27). Mark uses Jesus’ third explanation to the disciples that the Son of Man will be condemned, killed, and rise again (see 8.31n.), combined with the disciples’ stubborn misunderstanding, as a foil for exhortation on egalitarian social-political relations in the movement and its communities. **32–34:** The tone becomes ominous as they head toward Jerusalem and the climax of Jesus’ escalating conflict with the rulers there, as explicitly dramatized in the details added to this third announcement of his destiny there. **35–37:** James and John’s request indicates that they have completely misunderstood Jesus’ mission and movement as well as refused to hear what Jesus has repeatedly told them. **38–40:** They claim they are prepared to follow the path of Jesus into martyrdom for the cause, which he promises will happen. But he rejects their request as presumptuous. On the metaphor of *cup*, see 14.24,36; Isa 51.17; Lam 4.21. **41–45:** The request for positions of power and privilege results in conflict among the disciples. But in contrast to the imperial practices of the nations, there will be no rulers in Jesus’ movement or communities. Rather, would-be leaders must take

called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.”⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.”⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher,^a let me see again.”⁵² Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples² and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it.³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’”⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it,⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

^a Aramaic *Rabbouni*

the role of servants, following the paradigm of the Son of Man, Jesus, whose martyrdom will be a ransom (paid for redemption from slavery or indebtedness; see God’s “ransom” or “redemption” of Israel from subjection to Egypt, Ex. 6.6; 15.13; Isa 43.1–7) of many.

10.46–52: Healing of the blind Bartimaeus (Mt 20.29–34; Lk 18.35–43). The second healing of a blind man (see 8.22–26) that frames and completes this section focuses partly on the blindness of the disciples. **46:** *Jericho* is in the Jordan Valley ca. 21 km (13 mi) east-northeast of Jerusalem; a secondary road connected the two cities (see 11.1; Lk 10.30). *Bartimaeus* means *son of Timaeus* in Aramaic. **47–48:** Though blind, Bartimaeus nevertheless sees or knows that Jesus is the *Son of David*. In some circles a “son of David” was expected to restore the fortunes of Israel as king (2 Sam 5.1–5). In Mk 12.35–37 Jesus himself explains that the messiah is not the “son of David.” **52:** After his sight is restored, he pointedly *followed Jesus on the way*, in striking contrast to the disciples, who remained blind to what was happening.

11.1–13.2: Confronting the rulers and ruling institutions in Jerusalem.

11.1–11: A messianic demonstration (Mt 21.1–9; Lk 19.28–38; Jn 12.12–15). As Jesus and his followers enter into the capital city, they stage a “messianic” demonstration, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 9.9–10 of a peasant king riding on a donkey (cf. 1 Kings 1.38), not in an imperial war-chariot. **1:** *Bethphage and Bethany*, villages just east of Jerusalem. **8:** *Spread their cloaks on the road*, before the messiah, the “anointed” king, just as was done when Elisha anointed Jehu to lead the rebellion against the oppressive dynasty founded by Omri (2 Kings 9.1–13). The *leafy branches* appear to have a similar significance; cf. the “palm branches” waved in victorious celebration (with hymns, etc.) of the newly established independence of Jerusalem and Judea in 1 Macc 13.51. **9:** The throng shouts a psalm of thanksgiving (Ps 118.25–26) for victory over Israel’s enemies, one that was sung at the Passover festival. *Hosanna* means “Save us!” **10:** Added to the psalm, linking the festal demonstration with

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶ and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written,

‘My house shall be called a house of prayer
for all the nations’?

But you have made it a den of
robbers.”

¹⁸ And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples^a went out of the city.

²⁰ In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.

²¹ Then Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” ²² Jesus answered them, “Have^b faith in God. ²³ Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. ²⁴ So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received^c it, and it will be yours.

²⁵ “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that

^a Gk *they*: other ancient authorities read *he*

^b Other ancient authorities read “*If you have*

^c Other ancient authorities read *are receiving*

the hope of Israel’s future restoration and independence led by the anointed “son of David,” as in Bartimaeus’s repeated cry in 10.48–49 that just preceded the demonstration. 11: *On the temple*, see 11.12–25n. *Looked around*, after the messianic demonstration in seeming anticipation of the restoration of Israel, Jesus enters Jerusalem, but only to reconnoiter before launching his aggressive face-off with the rulers the next day.

11.12–25 [26]: **Prophetic demonstration against the Temple** (Mt 21.12–13, 18–22; Lk 19.45–48). Mark again sandwiches one story into another (cf. 3.19b–35; 5.21–43), framing the prophetic demonstration against the Temple with the cursing of the fig tree (which is bearing no fruit), a figure for God’s judgment in Israelite tradition (e.g., Isa 34.4; Jer 5.17). The *temple* in Jerusalem was the political-economic center of power as well as the sanctuary where the priests offered sacrifices to God. Supported by the tithes and offerings of the people, it had been rebuilt. In 20 BCE Herod the Great had mounted a massive rebuilding of the Temple into a vast complex of colonnades and shops as well as a center of Jewish pilgrimage and one of the wonders of the Roman imperial world. 15–16: Jesus took forcible action against the sellers and buyers in the large Court of the Gentiles, the principal open public space in Jerusalem, where anyone—including non-Israelites—could go. Commerce, including moneychanging, was necessary in connection with sacrifices and offerings in the semi-monetarized Temple economy. 17: Quoting Isa 56.7, and Jeremiah’s prophecy against the first Temple (Jer 7.11), Jesus interprets his action as a prophetic demonstration of God’s condemnation of the Temple. *Den of robbers* is better translated “bandits’ stronghold,” conveying more the original sense in Jeremiah that the rulers plunder the people like bandits and then seek refuge in the Temple. 18–19: In response to Jesus’ prophetic demonstration, the Jerusalem rulers intensify the long-standing scheme to kill him, known since 3.6. In preindustrial cities, rulers had to worry at festival times about touching off mob action by taking repressive measures against agitators, as indicated in 14.1–2. But Jesus and his disciples strategically withdraw from the city at evening. 20–24: This astounding statement about the mount of the Temple upon which Jesus has just demonstrated God’s condemnation says, in effect, to trust God to do what has been prophesied. 25–[26]: Early manuscripts omit v. 26, as does the NRSV translation. If original to Mark, it establishes mutual forgiveness (as in the Lord’s Prayer, Lk 11.2–4) as the focus of prayer, now that the Temple, the official site for prayer and for obtaining divine forgiveness (see Lev 6.7), stands under God’s condemnation.

your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”^a

²⁷ Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him ²⁸ and said, “By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?” ²⁹ Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me.” ³¹ They argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’” ³² But shall we say, ‘Of human origin?’—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

12 Then he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ² When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ And

again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. ⁵ Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. ⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” ⁷ But those tenants said to one another, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” ⁸ So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

¹⁰ Have you not read this scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;^b

¹¹ this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes?”

¹² When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

¹³ Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what

^a Other ancient authorities add verse 26, “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

^b Or *keystone*

11.27–33: Jesus’ authority (Mt 21.23–27; Lk 20.1–8; cf. Jn 2.18–22). The first in a series of sharp charges and countercharges in the escalating conflict between Jesus and the Roman-backed Jewish priestly rulers and their representatives. **27–28:** *The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders*, authorized presumably by God as well as imperial Rome, challenge Jesus on the *authority* by which he acts and speaks, referring to the confrontation regarding “authority and power” with which the whole gospel story began in 1.22–28. **29–30:** In his counter question Jesus cleverly entraps them and exposes their lack of authority among the people, while avoiding any statement that might seem to justify his seizure by them.

12.1–12: Parable of the vineyard (Mt 21.33–46; Lk 20.9–19). Building on the traditional image of Israel as the vineyard of God in Isa 5.1–7, Jesus tells a parable that invites listeners to see the chief priests, who were themselves absentee landlords of estates with tenant labor, as tenants of God’s vineyard. It also resonated with the resentment of indebted peasants who feared nothing more than becoming such share-cropping tenants on their own ancestral land and would have reveled at such role-reversal. In Mark the parable virtually passes over into allegory, with the landlord’s “slaves” being analogous to the prophets God sent to “tenants” to demand the fruit of justice, and the *beloved son* clearly being Jesus himself, as in 1.11 and 9.7, and the rejected *stone* becoming the *cornerstone* (citing Ps 118.22–23) of the new political-religious order that will replace the Temple establishment.

12.13–17: Paying taxes to the emperor (Mt 22.15–22; Lk 20.20–26). As in 3.6, the representatives of both the Jerusalem priestly establishment and Herod Antipas’s regime conspire to entrap Jesus into giving some pretext to arrest and kill him. **14:** They preface the entrapping question with heavy, insincere flattery. *Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor?* A genuine dilemma. In the strict adherence to the covenantal law (commandment) of Moses, supposedly advocated by the Pharisees themselves, it was not lawful because God was their exclusive sovereign. Yet the Romans treated nonpayment of tribute as rebellion. Some decades earlier the teacher Judas and

he said. ¹⁴ And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” ¹⁵ Should we pay them, or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” ¹⁶ And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.

¹⁸ Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, ¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man^a shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; ²¹ and the second married the widow^b and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; ²² none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. ²³ In the resurrection^c whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.”

²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵ For when

they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? ²⁷ He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.”

²⁸ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;’ ³⁰ 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.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” ³² Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; ³³ 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 oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not

^a Gk *his brother*

^b Gk *her*

^c Other ancient authorities add *when they rise*

the Pharisee Saddok had led a movement to refuse payment of the tribute, appealing to the same covenantal commandment, that God was their true and sole ruler (Acts 5.37; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4–23). **16:** Turning the trick question back upon the questioners, Jesus exposes their own collaboration with the Romans by asking them to show him a coin—literally forcing their hand. **17:** Jesus ingeniously gives an ambiguous answer that does not literally advocate nonpayment of tribute to the emperor, but could be understood that way by those committed to the first commandment of the covenantal law of Moses: *the things that are the emperor’s*, i.e., nothing; *the things that are God’s*, i.e., everything.

12.18–27: Dispute with the Sadducees (Mt 22.23–33; Lk 20.27–40). **18–23:** The Sadducees, the aristocratic priestly party of property, power, and privilege, denied that there could be a future resurrection of the dead. While their question took the form of academic casuistry, their focus on levirate marriage (Deut 25.5) hinted at their real agenda: the protection of property rights and power through patriarchal marriage that perpetuated the male lineage. **24–25:** Life after resurrection will not involve marriage. **26–27:** God’s words to Moses (Ex 3.6) speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the present tense, i.e., as *living* not *dead*.

12.28–34: Love your neighbor (Mt 22.34–40; Lk 10.25–28). The polemic softens, but the argument sets up the sharp condemnation of the scribes in 12.38–44. **29–31:** Jesus satisfies the scribe by immediately reciting Deut 6.4, but he quickly insists that love of God means love of neighbor by reciting Lev 19.18 as well, which climaxes a series of prohibitions against exploiting and oppressing the poor (cf. Lev 19.9–17; Lk 6.27–36; Mt 5.38–48). **32–33:** The scribe admits that love of God and love of neighbor are more important than the elaborate

far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah^a is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet.”

³⁷ David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

³⁸ As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! ⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to

them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

13 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” ² Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” ⁵ Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’^b and they will lead many astray. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not

^a Or *the Christ*

^b Gk *I am*

sacrifices at the Temple, from which he draws his living. **34:** The scribe does not “resign” his position, and Jesus does not invite him into the movement. Jesus has outmaneuvered all segments of the Temple establishment in the series of attacks and counterattacks from 11.27.

12.35–37: How can the messiah be David’s son? (Mt 22.41–46; Lk 20.41–44). This passage constitutes a rejection of any triumphalist restoration of the Davidic state (which Bartimaeus and the shouts of the crowd may have suggested; see 10.47–48n.; 11.10), reciting one of the imperial Davidic psalms (Ps 110.1) in the refutation.

12.38–44: Beware of the scribes (Mt 23.1,6; Lk 20.45–47; 21.1–4; 11.43; 14.7–11). **38–40:** Condemnation of the scribes, moving from their craving for honor to a concrete example of their exploitation of the poor. *Widows’ houses* refers to all their inheritance and resources. **41–44:** Illustrates how the scribes “devour widow’s houses”: by inducing them to give their meager resources to the Temple. For this “they will receive the greater condemnation” (v. 40), confirmed by the immediately ensuing prophecy of the destruction of the Temple which they serve (13.1–2).

13.1–2: Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Mt 24.1–3; Lk 21.5–7). This section of the Gospel, which began with Jesus’ prophetic demonstration against the Temple (11.15–17), ends with his prophecy of its destruction—also implicating those whose base of power it constituted.

13.3–37: Exhortation not to be distracted from the movement by distressing events (Mt 24.3–36; Lk 21.7–36). Jesus’ second speech uses prophetic and apocalyptic motifs in order to caution against an apocalyptic interpretation of historical crises of resistance, repression, and reconquest under Roman imperial rule, but to remain disciplined and vigilant in the struggle, despite persecution. The Israelite prophetic and Judean revelatory traditions are framed, balanced, and interpreted by the exhortation in vv. 5–6,9–13, and 28–37, particularly by the carefully positioned and repeated “beware/ be alert” in vv. 5,9,23,33. Judging from v. 14, these paragraphs must be written from a viewpoint outside both Jerusalem and Judea. **3:** Addressed through Peter and other disciples to the whole movement. **4:** Despite this apparent link with the destruction of the Temple just prophesied in v. 2, nothing in the rest of ch 13 implies that the events prophesied have anything to do with Jerusalem. **6:** /

be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

⁹“As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰And the good news^a must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

¹⁴“But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; ¹⁵the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; ¹⁶the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. ¹⁷Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸Pray that it may not be in winter. ¹⁹For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.

²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days. ²¹And if anyone says to you at that time, ‘Look! Here is the Messiah!’^b or ‘Look! There he is!’—do not believe it. ²²False messiahs^c and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³But be alert; I have already told you everything.

²⁴“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he^d is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

^a Gk *gospel*

^b Or *the Christ*

^c Or *christs*

^d Or *it*

am he, lit., “I am”; see 6.50n. 7–8: Stereotypical phrases from Israelite prophetic and Judean revelatory literature. *Rumors of wars* may refer to the intense resistance to the order of Emperor Gaius Caligula (37–41 CE) to install his bust in the Temple. *Famines* may refer to the disastrous effects of the severe drought in the late 40s. 9–13: Cf. Lk 12.2–12.51–53; Mk 8.34–38. Far from being distracted by wars and famines, the movement should expect repressions, but not worry, expect to be hated by all, but endure. 14a: A shift from the past to the present and future, from the readers’ standpoint. *The desolating sacrilege*, cf. Dan 9.27; 11.31; 12.11. In contrast to Mt 24.15, nothing in Mark’s vague phrase or the literary context points to Jerusalem or the Temple, let alone its destruction. 14b–20: Anticipation of events in Judea and Galilee, where political conflict escalated during the 50s and 60s, based on long experience of how the Romans reacted to actual or perceived resistance with severe repressive measures and “scorched earth” reconquest of the people. 21–22: Other prophets and messiahs were already familiar features in Judea in particular, and more appeared around the mid-first century. 24–25: Traditional prophetic portrayal of God’s coming in judgment, drawn from Isa 13.10; 34.4; Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.10,31; 3.15. 26–27: In contrast to Dan 7.13, where the “human-like one” symbolizes the elect generally, *the Son of Man* here presides over the gathering of the elect (cf. Zech 2.6; Deut 30.4). 28–31: Reassurance that the resolution of the historical crisis is near, as symbolized by the impending coming of the Son of Man, and that Jesus’ words are utterly credible. 28: Reverses the image of the fig tree from 11.12–14, now symbolizing new blessing for the people. 30: Cf. 9.1. 31: Cf.

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert;^a for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

14 It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus^b by stealth and kill him; ² for they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,^c as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii,^d and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish;

but you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the good news^e is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹ When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” ¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” ¹⁶ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

^a Other ancient authorities add *and pray*

^b Gk *him*

^c The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

^d The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

^e Or *gospel*

Isa 51.6; 40.8. 32–37: Since no one knows precisely when the crisis will be resolved, they must simply maintain discipline and *Keep awake*.

14.1–15.47: **Jesus' death as martyr-messiah** (Mt 26.1–27.66; Lk 22.1–23.56; Jn 18.1–19.42). 1–2: *Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread*, in March/April, celebrated Israel's deliverance from foreign rule in ancient Egypt. Repressive actions by rulers repeatedly touched off massive protest demonstrations at Passover. The concern of the Jerusalem rulers and their representatives to kill Jesus, signaled in 3.6 and indicated again in 11.18 and 12.12, finally focuses on a specific plot.

14.3–8: **Anointing for burial** (Mt 26.6–13; Jn 12.1–8). As a prophet had poured oil on the head of (anointed, made a messiah of) David and other popular kings leading Israel, so *a woman . . . poured ointment on Jesus' head*, but to prepare his body for burial. In reply to strenuous objections, Jesus recognizes what she has done as part of the gospel itself. 3: *Nard* was imported from the Himalayan mountains.

14.10–11: **Anticipation of betrayal** (Mt 26.14–16; Lk 22.3–6). It is from within the twelve, representatives of the renewed Israel, that the betrayal comes.

14.12–25: **The Last Supper** (Mt 26.17–29; Lk 22.7–20). 12–16: Just as the chief priests and scribes had resorted to covert means “to arrest Jesus by stealth” (14.1), so Jesus and his disciples are now operating covertly, “underground,” as indicated by Jesus' instructions for discreet movement inside the city and the carefully planned

¹⁷ When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” ¹⁹ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” ²⁰ He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread^a into the bowl^b with me.” ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

²² While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.”

²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴ He said to them, “This is my blood of the^c covenant, which is poured out for many.” ²⁵ Truly I tell 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.”

²⁶ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written,

‘I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.’

²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” ²⁹ Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” ³⁰ Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will

deny me three times.” ³¹ But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴ And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” ³⁵ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ He said, “Abba,^d Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” ³⁷ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?” ³⁸ Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial;^e the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has

^a Gk lacks *bread*

^b Other ancient authorities read *same bowl*

^c Other ancient authorities add *new*

^d Aramaic for *Father*

^e Or *into temptation*

signal of a *man carrying a jar of water* (a task that a woman would usually have performed). 18: Cf. Ps 41.9. 20: *Dipping bread into the bowl with me*, the common meal was the most intimate form of fellowship. 22–25: Mt 26.26–29; Lk 22.15–20; 1 Cor 11.23–26. Jesus’ words at the Last Supper became the words of institution of the regularly celebrated Lord’s Supper. 22: *My body*, without “for you” as in 1 Cor 11.24, clearly a collective symbol of the community. 24: *My blood of the covenant*, thus renewing the covenant between God and the people, alluding to the covenant ceremony on Sinai (Ex 24.4–8). *For many*, see Isa 53.12. 25: The Supper is eaten in anticipation of celebrating it *new in the kingdom of God*, whereas in 1 Cor 11.25–26 it is eaten also in memory.

14.26–52: **Agony and betrayal in Gethsemane** (Mt 26.30–56; Lk 22.31–53). Jesus’ prediction of the disciples’ desertion and their actual desertion frames his agonized prayer over his impending martyrdom and his enemies’ surreptitious seizure of him. 26: The Passover ended with the singing of Ps 115–118. 27: Zech 13.7; Jn 16.32. See 6.34n. 28: Although the disciples are all about to desert, the movement will continue as Jesus will go back to Galilee after his martyr’s death; see 16.7. 29–31: Cf. 8.34; 14.66–72; Jn 13.36–38; 18.15–18, 25–27. 32: *Gethsemane*, meaning “garden of oil,” was an olive orchard or “garden” (Jn 18.1) on the slope of the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem. 33–35: *Distressed and agitated . . . deeply grieved, even to death . . . threw himself on the ground*. The language and action are very strong, v. 34 echoing Ps 42.5,11; 43.5. 36: *Abba*, Aramaic for “father” (see 5.41n.). *This cup*, refers to both vv. 23–24 and 10.39, implicating the disciples, especially James and John. 37–41: The disciples are utterly incapable of doing what Jesus had emphasized in teaching about future crises; see 13.35–37.

come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

⁴³ Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰ All of them deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, ⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes

were assembled. ⁵⁴ Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” ⁵⁹ But even on this point their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” ⁶¹ But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah,^a the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶² Jesus said, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’” ⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy! What is your

^a Or *the Christ*

43–50: Emphasis is on the excessive force used by the Jerusalem rulers in their covert action to capture Jesus, as if Jesus were a violent bandit-chieftain. Jesus mocks their reluctance simply to seize him when he had been teaching in the Temple courtyard, which betrays their lack of “authority” and their political impotence with the people. **45:** *Rabbi*, see 9.5–6n. **47:** In contrast to Mt 26.52–53, Lk 22.51, and Jn 18.10–11, Jesus in Mark does not rebuke the spontaneous violent response by *one of those who stood near* (not necessarily a disciple, although identified as Peter in Jn 18.10). **49:** *Let the scriptures be fulfilled*, Jesus’ arrest, trial, and death in particular proceed “as written” in the scripture (vv. 21,27; etc.); *fulfilled*, only here and 1.15, marks a highly significant point in the overall gospel story. **51–52:** *Young man . . . naked*, presumably symbolic in the narrative, of the disciples now standing exposed as unfaithful deserters and of Jesus as defenseless before the rulers. The “young man” appears once more in the narrative in 16.5–7.

14.53–72: *Jesus condemned by chief priests and council and Peter’s denial* (Mt 26.57–75; Lk 22.54–71). Jesus is condemned twice, first by the ruling chief priest and council, then by the Roman governor. While the accounts are integral parts of the Gospel, not historical transcripts, they have historical plausibility against the background of Roman imperial rule in Judea. **53:** Convening the council at night would have been highly unusual, but by this point due process was hardly a concern of the Jerusalem rulers. **55–59:** Although Jesus had been speaking and acting in public (see v. 49), the council had no witnesses with credible testimony to justify his execution. The *false testimony* appears to be a confusing parody of Jesus’ prophetic condemnation of the Temple and his renewal of Israel (the “house of God” “not made with hands”?) in opposition to the Temple (the “house of God” “made with hands”?). **61–62:** *The Messiah*, it is unclear whether this is a charge. “*I am*” would be an uncharacteristic answer for Jesus (but see 6.50n.). It stands in sharp contrast with his answer to Pilate in 15.2: “You say so,” and both Mt 26.64 and Lk 22.70 have “You say (that I am),” which suggests that Mk 14.62 also originally read “You say so” or “Am I?” But in immediately confessing *the Son of Man . . . coming with the clouds of heaven* (quoting Dan 7.13 and Ps 110.1), Jesus gives the high priest all he needs for condemnation. **63–64:**

decision?” All of them condemned him as deserving death.⁶⁵ Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” The guards also took him over and beat him.

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by.⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.”⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, “I do not know or understand what you are talking about.” And he went out into the forecourt.^a Then the cock crowed.^b⁶⁹ And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.”⁷⁰ But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.”⁷¹ But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know this man you are talking about.”⁷² At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.

They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.² Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.”³ Then the chief priests accused him of many things.⁴ Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.”⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked.⁷ Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection.⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom.⁹ Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over.¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.¹² Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do^c with the

^a Or *gateway*

^b Other ancient authorities lack *Then the cock crowed*

^c Other ancient authorities read *what should I do*

Blasphemy would presumably refer to the confession of being the Son of Man, rather than his threat against the Temple. For the prescribed punishment, see Lev 24.16. See also 2.7. 66–72: Cf. v. 54. Peter’s denial of Jesus is juxtaposed to and simultaneous with Jesus’ confession and condemnation. Even the servants of the high priest share the prejudice against and contempt of Galileans such as Jesus, “the man from Nazareth,” and Peter. 71: Peter’s third denial is very strong language. *I do not know* *this man* had double meaning: As indicated repeatedly throughout the Gospel, Peter indeed does not understand who Jesus is and what he is doing. 72: See v. 30.

15.1–15: **Jesus condemned by Pilate** (Mt 27.1–2,11–26; Lk 23.1–5,18–25; Jn 18.28–40; 19.4–16). The second trial, before the Roman governor Pilate (26–37 CE). 1: This further *consultation* suggests that the specific charge(s) against Jesus were still not clear, and that this continued in the hearing before Pilate (v. 3). 2: It is the Roman governor who defines the charge as one of indigenous kingship in potential insurrection against the Roman order. The formulation of the question is that of outsiders to Israel, who viewed Galileans and others subject to Herodian rulers as “Judeans.” It is surely significant also that the title *King of the Jews* (i.e., Judeans) occurs only in speech by Pilate or the Roman soldiers and the inscription on the cross presumably placed there by Pilate’s order, in vv. 2,9,12,18,26, in contrast with “the Messiah, the King of Israel,” used by the chief priests and scribes in v. 32. Thus Jesus’ answer: “That is what *you* say.” 4–5: As in 14.60–61, Jesus is just “above it all,” or is deliberately refusing to cooperate in his own interrogation. 6–15: There is no evidence outside the New Testament of such a custom by Roman governors of Judea generally. Mark does not in any way suggest that “the Jews” demanded Jesus’ death. The crowd is stirred up by the chief priests. Infamous in sources outside the New Testament for his tough stance, provocations, and violence as Roman governor, Pilate is portrayed here as an experienced imperial official who understands both that Jesus is politically more dangerous to the Roman order than an anti-imperial assassin and how to mollify the crowd while manipulating them into a choice. On crucifixion as the intensely cruel Roman form of torture and execution for provincial rebels, see 8.34n. Beating was standard treatment of political prisoners, whether they were to be executed or not.

man you call^a the King of the Jews?" ¹³ They shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters^b); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² Then they brought Jesus^c to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.^d ²⁹ Those who passed by derided^e him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Messiah,^f the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. ³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land^g until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which

^a Other ancient authorities lack *the man you call*

^b Gk *the praetorium*

^c Gk *him*

^d Other ancient authorities add verse 28, *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And he was counted among the lawless."*

^e Or *blasphemed*

^f Or *the Christ*

^g Or *earth*

15.16–38: The crucifixion (Mt 27.27–48; Lk 23.18–43). **16–20:** Along with the *purple cloak* symbolizing royalty, the mockery, by the whole cohort, of Jesus as "King of the Judeans," includes several allusions to worship of the Roman emperor whom Jesus has the audacity to challenge: The crown of thorns suggests the laurel wreath crowning the emperor's head, the hailing suggests the acclamation of the emperor, and kneeling in homage suggests the prostration to the emperor. The mutual hostility between Mark's Jesus and the imperial army is unmistakably intense. **16:** A *cohort* consisted of about five hundred soldiers. **21:** *Simon of Cyrene*, a peasant *coming in from the country*, had perhaps moved back to Judea from the Diaspora Jewish community in Cyrene, west of Egypt; his sons apparently later joined the movement. This Simon in effect replaces Peter, whose original name was Simon, and who had just proven incapable of "taking up his cross" by denying Jesus instead of himself (8.34; 14.66–72). Perhaps they "compel" Simon to carry the cross because Jesus is already too weak from repeated beatings, 14.65; 15.15, 19. Once hung on the cross he died more quickly than expected (vv. 44–45). **23:** Jesus declines the offer of a sedative to mitigate the pain. **24:** *Casting lots*, see Ps 22.18; the first of three allusions to this psalm. **26:** The inscription indicates the crime: As "King of the Judeans" Jesus threatened to bring about a rebellion against the law and order of the empire, which was maintained by such gruesome, terrorizing violence against subject peoples. **27:** *Two bandits*, perhaps actually ancient "Robin Hoods"; but the Romans used the term contemptuously to demean rebels against Roman rule. *On his right . . . on his left*, cf. 10.37–40; not James and John, but the two "bandits" undergo the baptism of death with Jesus. **29–30:** *Shaking their heads*, cf. Ps 22.7–8. The mocking passers-by would appear to be hostile, using the same terms as the false witnesses in 14.56–58. **31:** *He saved others; he cannot save himself*, double meaning: cf. 8.34; 10.45. **33–38:** Mt 27.45–53; Lk 23.44–48. **33:** *Darkness came over the whole land*, crisis in the natural order indicating God coming in judgment (cf. Joel 2.2; Am 5.18–20; Zeph 1.15). **34:** "*Eloi, Eloi,*" Jesus crying out in abandonment in the words of Ps 22.1 in

means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”^a ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he^b breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”^c

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered

if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Then Joseph^d bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body,^e wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body^e was laid.

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” ⁴ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered

^a Other ancient authorities read *made me a reproach*

^b Other ancient authorities add *cried out and*

^c Or *a son of God*

^d Gk *he*

^e Gk *it*

Aramaic (see 5.41n.). **35–36:** Voyeurs, misinterpreting the word “Eloi,” suggest that he is calling for Elijah, and want to revive him, prolonging the ordeal, to see if Elijah comes. **37–38:** As Jesus dies, the curtain of the Temple (see Ex 26.33), separating but also protecting the people from the presence of God, is torn in two, in judgment on the Temple’s mediation of the Holy but also opening access to God for the people; see also 1.10.

15.39–47: Jesus’ burial (Mt 27.54–61; Lk 23.49–56). Three interrelated responses to Jesus’ death: by a military representative of the Roman rulers, by a representative of the Jerusalem religious establishment, and by loyal women followers. **39:** Just as Jesus’ other opponents earlier in the Gospel know who he is, so the Roman centurion (the equivalent of a company commander) presiding at his crucifixion recognizes that he was truly “a son of God.” While neither a confession of faith (the centurion continues his duties in 15.44–45) nor the final resolution of the “messianic secret,” contrary to previous interpretations, Mark ironically has the officer who presides at Jesus’ execution recognize his true identity. He also confirms to Pilate that Jesus is dead in 15.44–45. **40–41:** As the disciples, commissioned as the leaders of the movement, consistently misunderstood, women were healed by Jesus as symbolic of the renewal of Israel. Now, after the disciples had betrayed, denied, and abandoned Jesus, some of the many women who had followed him and provided for him stood by him, at a distance, throughout the ordeal. Neither of the two women named here has been mentioned earlier. Both will witness the burial site (v. 47) and the empty tomb (16.1). **42–46: Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council** that had condemned Jesus (see 14.64), but like the scribe in 12.28–34, interested in the kingdom of God, asked for the body. Apparently eager to dispose of it *before the sabbath*, he *wrapped it*, and secured it in a rock tomb sealed with a heavy stone (cf. 16.3n), without even a gesture of proper burial rites. **47:** Although the disciples, having completely disappeared, make no effort to afford Jesus proper burial (contrast John’s disciples in 6.22), the two Marys witness *where the body was laid*.

16.1–8: The empty tomb, the call back to Galilee, and they were afraid (Mt 28.1–8a; Lk 24.1–11). **1:** The women go finally to perform proper rites of burial. **3:** The disk-shaped stone rolled in a groove to close the tomb’s entry. **5:** The

the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” ⁸ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.^a

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.^b]]

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

⁹ [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

¹² After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³ And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

¹⁴ Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed

those who saw him after he had risen.^{c 15} And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news^d to the whole creation. ¹⁶ The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes in their hands,^e and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

^a Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9–20. In most authorities verses 9–20 follow immediately after verse 8, though in some of these authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful.

^b Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

^c Other ancient authorities add, in whole or in part, *And they excused themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now”—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, “The term of years of Satan’s power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, that they may inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness that is in heaven.”*

^d Or *gospel*

^e Other ancient authorities lack *in their hands*

young man (cf. 14.51–52) is *dressed in a white robe*, as a martyr vindicated by God would be dressed (cf. Dan 11.35; Rev 7.9,13), reminiscent of Jesus’ garments becoming “dazzling white” in the transfiguration, 9.3. **6:** The “young man” tells the women *He has been raised*; there was apparently no resurrection appearance in the original text of Mark that ended at 16.8. **7:** The risen Jesus is *going ahead . . . to Galilee* (cf. 14.28), where they *will see him*, in the same way as Jesus twice before said people would “see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven,” i.e., the standard symbol of the renewed Israel. Jesus is vindicated and his movement is to continue. Mark’s Gospel is open-ended and must be completed by the hearers and readers of the Gospel. **8:** The narrative ends with the women terrified. Obviously, however, they eventually told the tale, or Mark’s Gospel could not have been written.

16.9–20: Two attempts to provide a more satisfactory ending to the Gospel of Mark. The shorter ending. Although present in some manuscripts, this ending is clearly different from the rest of Mark in style and understanding of Jesus. It was evidently not added before the fourth century CE. **The longer ending.** Possibly written in the early second century and appended to the Gospel later in the second century. These sentences borrow

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with

them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.^a]]

^a Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

some motifs from the other Gospels and contain several unusual apocryphal elements. **9–10:** Mary is alone in Jn 20.1–2, 11–19. *Seven demons*, Lk 8.2. **11:** Lk 24.11, 22–25; Jn 20.19–29. **12–13:** Lk 24.12–35. **13:** Cf. Lk 24.34. **14–18:** Mt 28.19; Lk 24.47. **16:** Acts 2.37–42; 10.47–48; Rom 10.9. **17–18:** Exorcisms, Acts 8.6–7; 16.18; 19.11–20; *new tongues*, Acts 2.4–11n.; 10.46; 19.6; and possibly 1 Cor 12.10, 28; 14.2–33; snakes and drinking poison lack New Testament parallels. **19–20:** Jesus' exaltation, Phil 2.9–11; Heb 1.3; *taken up*, Acts 1.2, 11, 22; *right hand of God*, Ps 110.1; Acts 7.55; Heb 1.3.