

BOOK-A-MONTH CLUB

~ May ~

The Gospel of Mark Reading and Study Guide with Cathy Messecar

Get ready for a treat. As you read through the book of Mark in May, you will meet anew—Jesus the Wonderful, the breathtaking Savior sent to redeem the entire world.

You will also see a timeframe of Jesus' day-to-day ministry, when he went from one good work to another and didn't grow weary. The book of Mark uses the terms *immediately*, *at once*, *without delay*, *as soon as*, *just as* over 40 times. Those time references allow us to see that Jesus' day was crowded with needy people. His example—even when pressed—can help us pattern our responses after his *servant* heart. Mark helps us see the immediacy of the needs that surrounded Jesus.

Authorship: Most scholars agree that Mark wrote this gospel. However, Mark may have witnessed only parts of Jesus' ministry, making some think that Peter guided and advised Mark's writing of the gospel while they were in Babylon together (1 Peter 5:13).

John Mark: son of Mary (Acts 12:12), cousin or nephew to Barnabas (depending upon commentary opinions, Colossians 4:10).

Purpose: The purpose of Mark's gospel—written primarily to Gentile readers—proves by Jesus' works that he was sent from God, empowered over nature, demons, and illnesses. Mark shows that Jesus deserves allegiance above all others. Mark emphasizes the authority and miracles of Jesus rather than the teachings of Christ, and his inspired writing technique—of relating mostly miracles—reminded me of God arming Moses with miracles to prove to the Egyptians that God ruled supreme.

Theme: The word *servant* is only used seven times in the text of Mark, but the prevalent theme is captured in chapter 10:45 when Mark writes about Jesus that he *came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many*.

Date: 65-70 A.D (most scholars), while some give it a much earlier unreliable date.

Key Words: The *Inductive Study Bible* suggests key words or phrases to highlight in Mark: **immediately, at once, without delay, just as**. Also consider these: **authority, kingdom of God, references to Satan or demons and covenant**.

Throughout this study, my passion is to interest you in thinking about how Jesus interacts and life-supports you each day. I encourage you to daily offer a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus' intervention, healing, or comfort. Instead of ending a prayer "in Jesus' name"—which has a tendency to become trite or meaningless—try the sample prayer-ending phrases at the end of each chapter or come up with your own as you study Mark. Think of actual ways Jesus helped you throughout the day and end your prayers in that way.

The printed chapter-study includes a general question or two on each chapter, a summary thought and prayer endings; the online version at the church website is more substantive. I'll post the online version at my blog every few days and welcome your comments: <http://stainedglasspickup.blogspot.com/>

Chapter One

Verses 1-8, John the Baptist prepares the way

The long-awaited baby of Luke-one-fame, John (later known as the baptizer), became a nomadic prophet, who ushered in the Light to shine on those *living in darkness and in the shadow of death* (Luke 1:79).

If you had seen this bedraggled prophet dressed in camel's hair and feeding on locusts would you have listened to his message or discounted him as weird?

(By the way, my husband David thinks John occasionally filled in his menu with a roasted desert critter)

Verses 9-13, the baptism and temptation of Jesus

God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13), however, Jesus—God with us, in the flesh—could. Jesus employed several means to resist temptation. Name those. Have you also used these successfully? How? When?

Verses 14-20, the calling of the first disciples

In September of 1984, C. D. Davis, one of our ministers said, "If we are *really* following Jesus, he will *make* us fishers of men" (bold italics mine). Consider C D's challenge and these words of Jesus, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." What fisher-of-men gifts do you have?

Verses 21-28, Jesus drives out an evil spirit

Mankind has free will and we can obey God or not. What beings do not have a choice when God issues an imperative command? Sit quietly and imagine verses 23-28 playing out in front of you. Are you, too, amazed?

Verses 29-34, Jesus heals many

Notice how illnesses and diseases are mentioned separately from casting out demons? Why did Mark do that? Read James 6:10-13. Who are your unseen enemies? With God on your side, how will you defeat them?

Verses 35-39, Jesus prays in a solitary place

Jesus' solitary time with God maintained his heart, soul, servant spirit, work, and character. How do you maintain your ministries?

Verses 40-45, a man with leprosy

Consider the description of Jesus that he was *filled with compassion* when he saw the leprous man, and he reached out to touch and heal. Since Jesus is the only one worthy of comparing our actions to, how "filled" are we with compassion toward the suffering—the ill or those suffering the consequences of their sins?

Summary Thought: Jesus is able to overcome all outside forces and our inner weaknesses and to come along side to make us fishers of men.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus, who was tempted but did not sin (vs. 12).

In the name of Jesus, who prayed in solitary places (vs. 35).

Chapter Two

Verses 1-12, Jesus heals a paralytic

This is the occasion when friends brought a paralytic to be healed by Jesus. The crowded home offered no entrance, so they created one through a roof and lowered their friend near Jesus' healing hands. In verse 12, the onlookers were amazed when they saw the miracles performed that day.

How can we help our friends move from "amazed" to becoming saved by God's hand?

Verses 13-17, the calling of Levi

As [Jesus] walked along he saw Levi, Son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax collector's booth. In a Bible class, teacher Bill Owens mentioned that when Jesus passed by Levi (also know as Matthew) that he saw Levi. Others saw him and labeled him a *tax collector*. Honestly, do we sometimes label people or do we see the person before us, the individual?

Verses 18-22, Jesus questioned about fasting

Animal skins were pliable storage and expanded when new wine fermented. Jesus concluded his conversation about fasting with the old cloth/new cloth and new wineskins/old wineskins statement. What spiritual lesson is he teaching when he says about a winemaker: "He pours new wine into new wineskins"?

Verses 23-27, Lord of the Sabbath

Explain in a sentence or two what Jesus meant when he said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Summary Thought: I love the statement in verse 15: “While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him.” The text goes on to say many followed him. Ask yourself: Where do I rub shoulders with the world so I can bring them to the banquet of Christ?

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus who knows the thoughts of my heart (vs. 8). In the name of the physical and spiritual healer Jesus (vs. 17). In the name of Sabbath-Jesus, who interpreted God through scripture (vs. 25-26). In the name of Jesus who re-directs wrong thinking (vs. 27-28).

Chapter Three

Verses 1-6, Lord of Sabbath, continued

Deep distress overcame Jesus because of legalists who watched to find fault instead of looking for ways to help the broken. Consider your last 24 hours. Which camp are you in: The Camp of the Legalist or the Camp of Healing the Broken?

Verses 7-12, crowds follow Jesus

Consider the frequency of these phrases in these five verses: “large crowd,” “many people,” “crowd,” “crowding him,” “pushing forward to touch him.” Think through this scene: the curious and the ill had followed Jesus.

Do you ever feel that your day is crowded with the needy, too? Do you consider those meetings a blessing?

Verses 13-19, the appointing of the twelve apostles

Jesus chose 12 apostles “that they might be with him.” Consider how their association with Jesus affected their lives.

Just for fun: Jesus called James and John by another name sometimes: Sons of Thunder. If Jesus renamed you according to your personality, what might your new moniker be?

Verses 20-30, Jesus and Beelzebub

Jesus had opposition from family and from the teachers of the law who said his wonders were performed because of Jesus’ allegiance with the devil. In reply, Jesus talks about divided kingdoms and about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. How does putting out the Spirit’s fire equate with spiritual death? Read 1 Thess. 5:19

Verses 31-35, Jesus mother and brothers

Here, Jesus asked a question and then answers it. I like that! When told that his mother and brothers awaited him, he looked at a crowd seated around him and asked, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” He then declared the crowd, the followers, the learners and listeners were his mother and brothers. He said it with enthusiasm (an exclamation point follows his declaration). Explain about his spiritual family.

Summary Thought: A lot of irony and mystery permeate this chapter: While ridiculing Jesus of healing a shriveled hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees began their plot to kill Jesus on the Sabbath, a day set aside to “recognize” God through worship. Evil spirits recognized Jesus as the “Son of God,” while the witnesses of miracles claimed his power emanated from Beelzebub, the prince of demons. May we read about, recognize, and receive Jesus with clarity.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus, champion of an undivided kingdom (vs. 24), In the name of my brother Jesus (vs. 34).

Chapter Four

Verses 1-20, the parable of the sower

The parable of the sower includes descriptions of the different patches of earth where the farmer scattered seeds. How would you describe your patch of ground when you first heard God’s word? What does the patch of ground resemble now?

The word of God is always productive. What causes the word to get choked—for the spiritual breath of God to have no effect? Read 2 Cor. 12:7. There, Paul describes his thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan. Do you have any thorns crowding out good growth and resulting fruit?

Verses 21-25, a lamp on the stand

Mark pauses in the rapid telling of Jesus’ ministry to relay Jesus’ teachings:

- 1) A lamp’s purpose is to give light and the gospel was/is not a secret to be kept but should go out into the entire world
- 2) Listen carefully in regard to all things
- 3) Each person’s meted out condemnation or mercy determines how they will be judged
- 4) Be diligent in seeking God and more spiritual growth will come. Be a spiritual sloth and what small connection you have with God will dwindle.

Which one of these short teachings spoke to you?

Verses 26-29, the parable of the growing seed

The parable of a planted seed growing while the planter goes about his normal routine reflects a spiritual lesson. What is Jesus telling his “listening” followers, the ones with ears to hear?

Verses 30-34, Jesus calms the storm

Obviously, the tiny mustard seed—which can grow into a huge tree—represents the kingdom of God. Mark says Jesus told the crowds as many parables as they could understand and then explained the meanings when he was alone with his disciples.

Why do you think Jesus so often spoke in parables to the crowds?

Verses 35-41, Jesus calms the storm

Jesus sets a good precedent here when his disciples’ fears mounted because of the storm: he first helps alleviate stress and then builds up their faith. When you encounter people who have physical burdens—finances, health, relationships—how do approach and help them?

Summary Thought: Jesus spoke to the crowd in parables, stories about common things. However, the stories had a hidden message, and the crowds recognized that element giving them time to ponder instead of immediately dismissing Jesus’ teachings.

Prayer Endings: In the name of parable-teller Jesus (vs. 2); In the name of Jesus who stills and quiets my rocking boat (vs. 36)

Chapter Five

Verses 1-20, the healing of a demon-possessed man

In the cemetery a demon-tortured man (2 in Matthew) lived, when healed he begged Jesus to take him along with him.

By contrast, the pig herders who lost their revenue monetarily urged Jesus to leave their region.

Whom did Jesus leave behind to give an accurate accounting of God’s miraculous powers and glory?

Verses 21-43, a dead girl and a sick woman

As soon as the boat landed, a needy crowd gathered. Among them was Jairus whose 12 year old daughter was near death. Jesus agreed to see the girl, and on the way to Jairus’ house, a woman who had hemorrhaged for 12 years touched Jesus and was healed. Minister Steve Yates titled a sermon “The story of two daughters, the story of two twelves.”

Read Lev. 15:25, how might this type of isolation have affected this woman’s life? In your opinion how much courage and faith did this desperate woman possess to make it through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment?

When Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead, only her parents and Peter, James and John were present, and they were “completely astonished.” Recall a time the Lord completely astonished you in a time of need.

Summary Thought: The compassion of Christ is front and center in the graveyard, when the untouchable woman touched him, and beside the grieving parents.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus who restores lives (vs. 15, 29, 42); In the name of Jesus, who brings healing to a graveyard (vs. 2)

Chapter Six

Verses 1-6, a prophet without honor

Why did the community of Nazareth—the place of Jesus’ boyhood and young adult life—reject his teaching and power?

Verses 7-13, Jesus sends out the twelve

Jesus told these short term missionary disciples not to furnish things for their journey. Read Deut. 1:26-31 and Exodus 19:4-6. What picture of God as provider do you see there? What similar things did the disciples most likely learn about God’s provisions?

Verses 14-29, John the Baptist beheaded

Salome danced before Herod and asked on her mother’s behalf for John’s head on a platter. History reveals that her demise came about when she fell through ice, nearly severing her head and causing her death.

Ten members of this tyrannical family are mentioned in the New Testament. All I could think of when I read the historical that God is not mocked. I suppose that Zechariah and Elizabeth were already dead by the time of John's demise for they were very old when John the Baby came to them. I so hope they didn't have to suffer this betrayal and loss of their son.

Verses 30-44, Jesus feeds the five thousand

Jesus and his disciples reel from the news of John's death, and yet when the hungry need feeding, Jesus sets aside his grief and dons an apron. He had compassion on them because they were like "sheep without a shepherd." Compare the self-interests of Herod, the Pharisees and teachers of the law to Shepherd Jesus.

Verses 45-56, Jesus walks on water

Jesus arranges to get his disciples a brief rest in a boat and himself some prayer time in the hills. Even after all the miracles witnessed, they didn't understand the source of Jesus' power. Read and then picture in your mind verses 54-56 about the storm and Jesus walking on the lake. I refuse to judge these disciples for I fear what my skeptic nature would have thought had I been there. Swamped by water! Swamped by miracles! What a sight it must have been.

Summary Thought: The tenderness of Jesus oozes from this chapter. Even a Roman citizen who later read this could not fail to compare Herod's wretched beheading of John with the shepherd/healer Jesus. Destruction verses Life.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus my compassionate guide (vs. 34), In the name of Jesus who is able to break through to my understanding and hardened heart (vs. 51-52).

Chapter Seven

Verses 1-23, Clean and unclean

In prayer to God read aloud verses 20-23, and ask for him to reveal and heal any heart impurities. "Did you wash our hands?" How many times did we hear that from our moms? Jesus knew about germs on the outside, but he knew the deadliest of all lurk in hearts.

Verses 24-30, the faith of the Syrian Phoenician woman

Jesus looked at the woman's heart and heritage. Give your thoughts about the dialog between Jesus and the woman.

Verses 31-37, the healing of a deaf and dumb man

Jesus returns to the Decapolis—region of ten cities—where the former demoniac has been a witness. In verse 14, what does Jesus' sighing mean to you? Elwood Sanner calls Jesus' sigh a "prayer without words."

Summary Thought: For those who set themselves up as religious teachers, Jesus toughest criticisms landed on them, "You nullify (*reverse, quash, cancel out, invalidate*) the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus, who verifies the word of God (vs. 18); In the name of Jesus who cleans the heart whiter than snow (vs. 14).

Chapter Eight

Verses 1-13, Jesus feeds the four thousand

Very crowded. Three days and nights. No decent sleeping arrangements for so many. Concentrate on Jesus' words, "I have compassion for these people...." How does my charity compare in even less trying circumstances?

Verses 14-21, the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

The disciples have forgotten to bring along bread again, so when Jesus begins a spiritual lesson, the temporal overrides his teaching. They have ears, but aren't hearing, eyes but aren't seeing; brains but not understanding, and these are Jesus' chosen learners.

Verses 22-26, the healing of a blind man at Bethsaida

Everything about this scene is touching, you've heard of the blind leading the blind, but here, Jesus "took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village." Precious Jesus hold my hand!

Verses 27-30, Peter's confession of Christ

Our confession of Christ as Lord and Son of God at our Christian baptism is just the beginning of lifetime-confessions. Today, sometime, confess to God your belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

Verses 31-37, Jesus predicts his death

When Jesus rebuked Peter, he also said, “You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.” How could this assessment also fit our lives today?

Summary Thought: Jesus introduces even deeper teachings after he announces his impending suffering and death: he talks about cross bearing and living a life for the gospel. He calls his disciples to live out his death, burial and resurrection each day.

Prayer Endings: Through Jesus who sighs deeply for me at the throne of God (vs. 12);
Open my eyes, Lord, through Jesus who led blind men and blind disciples (vs. 23, 37).

Chapter Nine

Verses 1-13, the transfiguration

Jesus introduced three of his disciples to members of his heavenly family: Moses and Elijah. This was a premier private event that would help the disciples’ later understand the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus—a lot to ponder as they descended the mountain.

Verses 14-32, the healing of a boy with an evil spirit

Jesus said to the boy’s father, *Everything is possible to him who believes*. Has the father’s astute prayer ever been your prayer: *I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief?* What were your circumstances?

Verses 33-37, who is the greatest?

Jesus taught the Twelve how to welcome God by standing a child among them? Why was the lesson needed? What did he teach?

Verses 38-41, whoever is not against us is for us

Write in practical terms what these four verses say to you?

Verses 42-50, causing to sin

What extreme examples does Jesus use to illustrate the seriousness of sin’s infectious hold on a life?

Summary Thought: The necessary busyness of Jesus is prevalent in the book of Mark. Thousands follow for bread, and space around Jesus is a nightmare emergency clinic, demons are tossed out of hosts, Elijah and Moses re-visit Earth, and the disciples rehash childhood dreams of “Me first.” No wonder Jesus makes sure to get his disciples away from the crowds, alone to teach them. Have you learned the lesson of being refreshed with Jesus away from crowds (vs. 30)?

Prayer Endings: Blessed Jesus, in memory of your salt and peace, make me like you (vs. 50); In the name of Jesus who took children in his arms, may we teach our little ones to honor you (vs. 36).

Chapter Ten

Verses 1-12, divorce

In the perfect world there would be no marital conflicts. Has your world ever been rocked by divorce—yours or someone else’s?

Jesus pointed back to creation and God’s intentions for marriage instead of dwelling on man’s inadequacies. If you have time look up the original meaning of helpmeet, it just might define a part of marriage that is vital to its happiness and missions.

Verses 13-16, the little children and Jesus

Children delight in receiving gifts and kingdom entry is a gift. Compare your kingdom-receiving to a child accepting a gift.

Verses 17-31, the rich young ruler

Do you think Jesus’ teaching about riches meant that only the poor qualified to be in God’s kingdom? Here, was he dealing with gold, silver, possessions, or the heart?

Verses 32-34, Jesus again predicts his death

Again, Jesus brings up the subject of his suffering, death, and resurrection. Astonishment and fear are both mentioned here. Within the context of these verses, think through these differences in attitude and write down your thoughts.

Verses 35-45, the requests of James and John

A wide gap exists between James and John wanting to be first in the coming kingdom and Jesus being a servant on earth. Thinking on a scale of 1 to 10, James and John at 1 and Jesus at 10. Where are you? Do you want recognition with James and John or a life of service with Jesus?

Verses 46-52, blind Bartimaeus receives his sight

From this story, my favorite words are “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Name at least three exact things Bartimaeus did to get to Jesus.

Summary Thought: Jesus literally called them together (verse 42). His actions reflect his core message that his disciples then and now are to be known for having the mind of Christ and for serving one another (Ephesians 4:32).

Prayer Endings: In Jesus’ name, who calls us (vs. 49); In the name of Jesus, worth more than silver and gold (vs. 21)

Chapter Eleven

Verses 1-11, the triumphal entry

The crowd created great fanfare when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Within a week, they went from palm waving and shouting praises to screaming *Crucify him! Crucify him!* Is your devotion to Christ growing? Sometimes it’s easier to talk in general terms about God to others, how often do you speak and honor the name of Jesus?

Verses 12-26, Jesus cleanses the temple, the withered fig tree

In these two combined sections the fig tree without fruit shrivels at Jesus’ command and the Gentile court is cleansed of the buyers and sellers. Compare the purpose of the fig tree, the temple, and your God-ordained purpose.

What “aside” lesson is taught when Peter pointed out the withered fig tree?

Verses 27-33, the authority of Jesus questioned

Why did Jesus refuse to answer the question of the elders, chief priests, and the teachers of the law?

Summary Thought: I find it significant that in the context of cleansing the temple that Jesus calls people back to the original purpose of his *house*—that it would be *called a house of prayer for all nations*. This is why he is moving toward the cross so all may kneel there.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus, the cornerstone of a new house (vs. vs. 17). In the name of Jesus who said: ask, believe, receive (vs. 24).

Chapter Twelve

Verses 1-12, parable of the tenants

Earlier parables about the kingdom were not understood by the crowds, possibly allowing them time to discover and ponder the underlying message. Cloaked in another story was a cryptic message about the Jewish leaders plotting to kill Jesus, but they clearly understood he spoke of them. Why?

Verses 13-17, paying taxes to Caesar

Give back to Caesar what is Caesars and give back to God what is God’s. How do you live this out in your life?

Verses 18-27, marriage at the resurrection

Duplicity seems to be inherent in folk who serve self interests. What deceit do you see in verse 18 and the question posed to Jesus (verses 19-23)?

Verses 28-34, the greatest commandment

This teacher of the law asks a sincere question. After Jesus’ reply, he made a statement about the teacher. What was Jesus’ observation and what do you think it meant?

Verses 35-40, whose son is the Christ?

As Jesus taught in the temple courts, *the large crowd listened to him with delight*. What is different about Jesus’ teaching and the pride-filled, iron rule of the Jewish leaders?

Verses 41-44, the widow’s offering

Jesus watched the crowd put money into the temple treasury. Although his human eyes took in the gestures and amounts, what was he really measuring?

Summary Thought: Jesus was recognized as a man of integrity even by those who opposed him because it was obvious that he did not operate on the opinions men had of him (vs. 14).

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus the God of the living (vs. 26-27); In the name of glorious Jesus, the capstone of my life (vs. 10).

Chapter Thirteen

Verses 1-31, signs of the end of the Age

Jesus gives the commands to watch out and be on guard against folk who make predictions. Why? How are prophecies and prophets to be “proved” (Deuteronomy 18:22)?

Verses 32-37, the day and hour unknown

Jesus said only the Father knew the end of time. How sobering is Jesus’ warning, “If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping”? David Willy’s study in January covered 1 Thessalonians, re-read chapter 4:13-18.

Summary Thought: The Lord’s return is not to cause anxiety or fear but comfort. Talk about this with a fellow Christian this week. How could we better implement this in our time with each other?

Prayer Endings: In Jesus name, who comforts us with thoughts of his return (vs. 26); In the name of Jesus, who helps me find and carry out my assigned tasks for him (vs. 34).

Chapter Fourteen

Verses 1-11, Jesus anointed at Bethany

Mark says Jesus’ dinner host was described or known as “Simon, the Leper.” If folk referred to you with a description what might they tag you with in your story on earth? Who is the woman who anointed Jesus (John 12:3)?

Verses 12-26, the Lord’s Supper

Compare the long ago events of Passover to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Exodus 12).

Verses 27-31, Jesus predicts Peter’s denial

Here Jesus says Peter will deny his relationship with Jesus. After Jesus’ resurrection, he addresses Peter and teaches him about real allegiance and God’s kind of love. Read about this encounter at the Sea of Tiberius (John 21:15-19). What touches you as you read?

Verses 32-42, Gethsemane

“Gethsemane” means olive press. This was a location where the olive harvest was processed—where oil came from the end of the harvest. What does the symbolism of the place where Jesus prayed mean to you? What pressed upon Jesus in this place? What does the word “cup” represent in Jesus’ earnest plea? What eventual sustenance for all mankind came through Jesus’ prayer-struggle in Gethsemane?

Verses 33-51, Jesus arrested

The original says that Judas “kissed him much”—, that he produced deceptive over-the-top acting to show that he really loved Jesus. Verse 51 probably refers to Mark, a young man (possibly around 15 years old) wearing only a linen garment. The soldiers seized him and he fled naked into the night—Judas had a bare soul and Mark a bare body. What does this verse mean to you—*Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ* (Romans 13:14)?

Verses 53-65, before the Sanhedrin

Here, the Son of the Blessed One, our current High Priest is confronted by a tainted high priest of the Jews. What laws did he break when he tore his clothes (Lev. 21:10)?

Verses 66-72, Peter disowns Jesus

Is there a difference to you between the words “denies” and “disowns.”

Summary Thought: Stark contrasts are revealed in this chapter between fake follower Judas, the vacillating-follower Peter, and the steadfast, love-driven, God-obeying Jesus.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus, who still cries Abba Father for me (vs. 36). In the name of Jesus, who sets the example of keeping silent at appropriate times (vs. 61).

Chapter Fifteen

Verses 1-15, Jesus before Pilate

Here, Jesus is bound, questioned, accused of wrongs, and yet, he remained silent. Pilate is amazed. How did Jesus' silence set him apart from ordinary prisoners?

Verses 16-20, the soldiers mock Jesus

The irreverent *whole company of soldiers*, stripped Jesus naked, clothed him with a purple robe, crowned him with thorns, shouted to him as a king, repeatedly hit his head with a staff, spit on him, and fell on their knees in false worship. Stripped of the purple robe, they put Jesus' seamless tunic back on him. Compare the silent Lamb of God—robed with the honor of obedience to his father—to the sham soldiers. What might a Roman think when he read Mark's account nearly 100 years later?

Verses 21-32, the crucifixion

On the cross, the extreme physical suffering plus verbal abuse continued. Also crushing the spirit of The Anointed One was my and your sins, and God-in-One would pray *forgive them*. Consider the total depravity of man and the extravagant love of God.

Verses 33-41, the death of Jesus

Is it any wonder that the lights of heaven darkened during the last hours of Jesus' cross bearing? Take a look at each person or group mentioned as being near the cross. Who were they and what purpose did they have in being nearby?

Verses 42-47, the burial of Jesus

Describe Joseph of Arimathea's position and probably mindset.

Summary Thought: Throughout the horrific events of this chapter, Jesus remains distinct in his behavior and true to his calling to become the firstborn son.

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus who recognizes false worship (vs. 19). In the name of Jesus, who capably rebuilds human temples (vs. 29).

Chapter Sixteen

Verses 1-8, the resurrection

When Jesus appeared to Saul, he identified himself as *Jesus of Nazareth* (Acts 22:8). Why did the angel at the empty tomb use the identifier *Jesus the Nazarene*? What mission did the angel give the women? Did they carry it out (Luke 24:9-12)?

Verses 9-20 (earliest, most reliable manuscripts do not contain these verses)

If Mark indeed ended his gospel-telling at verse 8, do the last nine words of that verse speak powerfully about witnessing about the Christ to both his Christian, Roman and Gentile readers: *They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid*.

Summary Thought: As followers of God, our hope is placed in Jesus and the miracle of three words: *He is risen!*

Prayer Endings: In the name of Jesus who topples gravestones (vs. 3-4). I pray through Jesus, who is good news (vs. 15).

Note from Cathy: May we embrace the courage and mission of Christ to model the gospel to all—empowered by his manners, meekness, forgiveness, and the generous Holy Spirit.

At the very beginning of this study, I referred to Jesus as the “breathtaking Savior.” May Mark's portrait-in-words of Jesus' deity so grab our souls that we share with any who come near us the wonder of God who walked this earth.

Bibliography

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