

The Gospel according to Mark

Who Is Mark?

None of the Gospel authors name themselves in the text but Early Christian tradition and commentaries attribute names to them. Usually they are attributed to an Apostle or of someone closely connected to one.

The heading *Kata Markon*, according to Mark is seen in the earliest of manuscripts of Mark that date back to the early 3rd Century .

According to ancient tradition, Mark was a disciple of Simon Peter. Mark bases his Gospel on the teaching and preaching of Peter in Rome. Papias (ca AD 60-140), a 3rd Gen. Christian attests to this and some time later Clement of Alexandria (ca 150-215) also confirms this tradition. Many other significant figures of the early Church testify to this tradition, Tertullian, Irenaeus and Origen.

Mark is also traditionally identified with the Mark in the Acts (Acts. 12:12,25). If so, he was the son of a Mary who owned a home in Jerusalem used as a meeting place for Christians, possibly the “upper room” of the Last Supper. Also the Cousin of Barnabas.

Tradition also holds that Mark went on to establish the Church in Alexandria as its first Bishop.

Mark’s first readers were probably the Christians in Rome under the Emperor Nero.

Nero persecuted the Christians and blamed them for the great fire in AD 64.

There is nearly unanimous agreement that the Gospel was written within a few decades of the resurrection of Jesus. But there is no clear agreement as to if it was written before or after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem AD 70. However, some factors seem to show the earlier date as with the persecution of the Christians under Nero and the tradition that Peter knew of the Gospel.

For centuries Mark’s Gospel was neglected and only rarely used for teaching until the middle-ages, when the first commentaries appeared (Aquinas). St. Augustine was largely to blame for this as he called it an abbreviation of Matthew and had little distinctive to say.

In the 19th Century the rise of Biblical scholarship there was a new interest in the Synoptic problem.

Why are the 3 Gospels so similar and yet so different? And was there copying from one another? And which came first?

It was initially thought that Mark was the closest to the events and simply written, but had little or no theology. By the end of the 20th Century, more studies reveal that Mark was a formidable historian, theologian and pastor. His structure of the Gospel is now seen as one of profound literary artistry. Mark skilfully composes the story and connects OT Scripture and his theology into almost every phrase revealing the unique mystery of Christ that the Church now recognises as an indispensable part of the Scriptures. (Catechism 126-27)

Mark shows the weakness of the disciples by his direct knowledge of them through Peter. He also highlights the human qualities of Jesus to show his Human face to the suffering Christians of Rome. Mark often describes the emotion and compassion, indignation, anger and exasperation and distress and and sorrow of Jesus.

Mark has a literary technique of addressing the reader directly in an aside, or sometimes using a statement of Jesus to the Pharisees that can be seen as a comment to the reader,(2;10), (7:19).

The heart of Mark's theology is the paradox of the messiah who enters his glory through suffering and self emptying on the cross. The gospel is a journey heading to the cross because of Jesus' public ministry but has the joy of the resurrection and life always in sight.

The first part of the story proclaims the the absolute victory over Satan and sin. His healing the prediction of raising the dead on the last day.

The secret of discipleship can only be found in the Cross. To be a follower of Christ is to share in the life and suffering of Jesus in an intimate communion.

Even though the disciples seem to be thick and inept even abandon Jesus when things get dangerous, Jesus remains true and faithful to the Father, and so gains forgiveness for them.

Mark portrays a Jesus that is totally human, who trembled in anguish and thought of his passion and felt abandoned by everyone including God. But has the most profound affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God.

The Gospels are unique as a special kind of literature. They are written from the standpoint of a living faith in Jesus the Christ. The one who rose from the dead and is exalted as Lord of Creation. For the authors of the Gospels Jesus is alive, his life in time is not only a past event but is now a source of grace and power through faith.

The power of the Gospels is to bring us into contact with the living Jesus and is dependant on the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the deepest meaning of the truth in the mind of the reader and so into communion with God the Father.

Mark in particular is a conscious continuity of the Hebrew scriptures and needs to be read in the context of them. All of the experience of Israel with their God, finds it full meaning in Christ.

Mark wrote the Gospel in a particular time and setting, where the Christians were persecuted, feared and killed for their faith, it was a time that is now very similar in many places in the world.

Acknowledgement to Mary Healy

The Beginning of the Good News

Mark 1:1-13

“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

The opening verse is the title of the work.

It clearly states that it is about Jesus the Christ who is the Son of God and his good news.

The first 13 verses serve as a prologue introducing Jesus as the Messiah. These verses are densely packed with OT images and unfolds the continuing plan of God’s relationship with the people of Israel.

Messiah, the term is Hebrew, meaning anointed, (Christos in Greek)

In the history of Israel there were 3 kinds of Messiah, or anointed one, priests, prophets, and kings were given their roles by being anointed. Ex. 21:7, 1Sam. 10:1, 1Kgs. 19:16, and called the Lord’s anointed or the Lord’s Messiah. 1Sam 24:7, Ps.2:2.

After the conquest of Israel and Judah, the monarchy came to an end, but the prophetic hope was a future restoration of Israel brought about by the Messiah. Ps.89, a hope that in some way a descendant of David would appear to restore the Glory God to the Land and bring about a reign of justice, peace prosperity and freedom. Isa.61:1

It introduces the figure of John the Baptist as the prophet Elijah, who is to prepare the coming of the day of the Lord. And the prophesy of Isaiah (40:3) is quoted but with a blend of Exodus and Malachi. To lead the people out of exile through the desert back to their homeland.

In Exodus,(23:20) God says that he will send his messenger (angel) to guide the people. Malachi (3:1) says a messenger will prepare the way for God’s sudden coming, the Day of the Lord.

This preparation is to be made by contrition and repentance. The desert is important as a place that strips away the comforts and self reliance to be dependant on the grace of God for their needs and to renew their relationship with a loving God.

John’s baptism of repentance, (Metanoia, a change of heart) called the whole of Israel to a return to God. It was a hard message but one that filled the hunger of the people and attracted large crowds.

Baptism was the plunging under the Water, this was a symbol of purification Lev.15:+Ps.51:9) and the Jordan River had a great symbolic meaning for the people. Joshua led the people into the promised land through the Jordan.

Joshua the Hebrew Name, Yahweh saves, is the same as the Greek version, Jesus.

John was heralding a new exodus from slavery but now a slavery to sin.

John’s appearance and lifestyle was as described of Elijah, his diet of Locusts and Honey could be seen as a reflection of the Plagues of Egypt as a punishment for sin, and the Honey as coming into the Land of Milk and Honey.

The one who is coming after is the Mighty one and will baptise with the Holy Spirit. (Joel 3:1-2, Zech. 12:10) God will pour out his Spirit like water.

(Baptism in the Spirit, Charismatic renewal) a coming alive in the grace of God, Pentecost.

Baptism of Jesus

Mk.1;9-11

Mark gives no explanation why Jesus comes to John for Baptism. The suggestion seems to be that he comes because of his total solidarity with sinful humanity, an act that will lead him to the cross. The immersion under water is a symbol of death and resurrection. Ps. 69:2-3 : 124:3-5, Jonah 2:3-5. Later Jesus will speak of his death as a baptism.(10:28) Jesus stands in solidarity as intercessor with sinners under God's judgement. The OT taught that sin creates a barrier between God and Humanity that cannot be breached, however, Isa. 59:2 God will come down to his people after they have been cleansed. The early church links the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus to Pentecost.

The whole of creation is affected by the humility of Jesus, the Heavens are TORN asunder a sign that the barrier between God and Humanity is being removed Isa.63:19. The same word Rent, Tear is used at the death of Jesus on the cross when the veil of the temple is torn, completing the reconciliation of Heaven and Earth.

The Spirit descends LIKE a dove. Not a dove! But gentle, peaceful and graceful. And a voice came from heaven, you are my son, the beloved with you I am well pleased. Recall the Spirit hovering over the waters at creation, the dove of peace after the flood, the implications of a new creation time, a time of the Spirit.

This event is the first time the whole trinity is revealed, the Father sends the Spirit on the beloved Son. There are so many references to OT in this passage, (Ps. 2:7) (Isa.42:1)(Gen.22:12) beloved son equals only Son, indicating the unique relationship. The event does not seem to have been experienced by onlookers, except John the Baptist (Jn.1:29-34). But the readers of the Gospel are in the know of the secret identity of Jesus from the first lines of the Gospel.

As god's beloved son Jesus embodies Israel, and even though Israel did not live up to the role, God's affirmation of Jesus precedes the fulfilment of his mission.

The words of God you are my beloved son/daughter has to be accepted as our identity for us to live out with courage the mission God has called us to.

Temptation in the Desert (1:12-13)

OT; Gen. 3:24, Deut. 2:7;8:2

The Spirit immediately drove Jesus into the wilderness/desert.

Jesus had identified himself with sinful humanity and that choice comes with a price, one that will lead him to the cross. As Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, Jesus is driven out into the desert for 40 days. As Israel was in the desert for 40 years, Jesus relives the story of Israel but in

total obedience to the father. In the scriptures the desert is the realm of evil powers, wild beasts and danger. Lev.16:10, Isa.35:7-9, Ezek. 34:25

he is put to the test by Satan. (The adversary)The test is about obedience, about identity and the resolve to follow the father's will. Mark doesn't describe what these temptations are, but Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke. 4:1-13, gives us the story of 3 basic questions, challenges put to Jesus by Satan.

The Following is from Luke.

'If you are Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' but Jesus replied, 'Scripture says:

Human beings live not on bread alone.'

'I will give you all this power and their splendour, for it has been handed over to me, for me to give to anyone I choose. Do homage, then, to me, and it shall all be yours.'

But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

you must do homage to the Lord your God, him alone you must serve.'

'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him, 'throw yourself down from here, for scripture says:

He has given his angels orders about you, to guard you and again:

They will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

The temptations are all from scripture.

Jesus had to face the difficulties of discernment of the external forces that interfere with our perception of reality and truth. These are the forces or influences that have been called the spirits and powers of evil.

The common perception of the coming Messiah was as Prophet, Priest or King.

The possibility of feeding the multitudes as a prophet of old, or to gain power and prestige as a New Priesthood to restore the power of the Temple and worship, through powerful signs and wonders was attractive, as was the gift of power and authority over the world as a New King. But would that show lead to a change of heart in the people? And is identifying with humanity in a humble attitude of a beloved Son by his baptism, the way that God wants for him? Knowing that the latter would lead to rejection by the people and suffering for him, Jesus overcomes the temptations of power and chooses the way of the suffering servant.

Mark then says that having been tempted he was with the wild beasts and the angels waited on him. Isa. 11:1-9, Ezck. 34:25-28 there is a hint here that there is a restoration of the original order of creation and a connection to the readers of the time of Nero and the suffering Christians in the persecutions.

Jesus entered the domain of evil to confront Satan on his home ground and wins. But throughout the rest of the story he meets and casts down the demons that plague humanity. Cat. 409, 2752.

A New Teaching with Authority

1:14-45

Isa. 52:7, 61:1-7, Cat. 543-546

Mark says that John was arrested,(handed over, betrayed), the same word that is used about Jesus' passion. So right at the start of Jesus' ministry the cross casts its shadow over him.

Galilee, the land of darkness and outcasts. Jesus proclaims the good news that the time is fulfilled the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news.

The kingdom in the person of Jesus is present and the occupying forces of evil are to be overthrown. The response is to believe and have a change of heart.

The call of the first disciples 1:16-20

1Kgs. 19:19-21, Jer. 16:14-16, Cat. 520, 787-788, 863-865

Simon and Andrew are called with a simple promise of a change of life, to become fishers of men. See the prophesy of Jeremiah 16:14-16 . They respond Immediately, a word used by Mark many times to emphasise the urgency no hesitation and no argument. Compare this to Elijah calling Elisha. The call is repeated for James and John who also respond immediately. Such a radical reaction must have raised many questions and shock of the people left behind. They left their family obligations and the claim of Jesus on them was absolute.

These 4 men become the closest intimate companions of Jesus and yet , Mark is not afraid of showing their lack of understanding and failures. And yet they were the founders of the new way of Christ after Pentecost and their stories are worth recalling. Also that every Christian is chosen and called to a significant and unique role in the kingdom. But there is always a high cost to discipleship.

Why did Jesus call these men? What was significant about them? They were chosen! As we are!

The beginning of the end for the Demons

1:21-28

Cat. Exorcisms, 550,1673, Sabbath,345-349

Jesus with his new 4 disciples enter the synagogue of Capernaum. This is the place according to Mark where Jesus makes his base/home, it is the home of Peter and Andrew.

Here Jesus preaches. We are not told what about only that the people are astonished, because he taught with authority. Mark repeats this astonishment in several significant places in the Gospel. This authority and teaching has the effect of exposing evil, and so enabling it to be expelled and defeated. In the synagogue the man with an unclean spirit cries out in fear and rage and challenges

Jesus for invading his domain. He claims to have hidden knowledge of Jesus' true identity. Holy One is a term usually reserved for God. (1Sam 2:2, Hosea 11:9,) but sometimes for the one consecrated in the service of God,(Num. 16:5-7, 2Kgs 4:9, Ps.106:16) either way the title is correct for Jesus but not one that Jesus wants to be known yet. Jesus commands that he be (*muzzled*) quiet Come out of Him. The unclean spirit comes out not able to resist the command. The possessed man is set free. John the Baptist' prediction of a Mighty One has been realised in Jesus. The amazement of the people is not just because the teaching is new, but that it has the power to do what it says. The Good News of God setting people free from their captivity to evil. Isa. 55:11. and so the fame of Jesus spreads everywhere.

The Sabbath a sign of humanity's special dignity and liberation from slavery and of the covenant with God Jesus often healed on the Sabbath as a witness to the covenant and restoration of human dignity.

Demons, Unclean spirits. Cat.391-395 possession is still very real today but is often very subtle forms, addiction, ethnic discrimination, abuse, etc. all aimed at destroying the image of God in Humanity.

For Mark, the demons, evil and unclean spirits are real, personal and are determined to prevent God's plan of salvation for humanity. The Church has always taught that they are real and malevolent spiritual beings that are fallen spirits through their free will to go against the will of God. But the authority and power of Jesus through his passion and resurrection is greater and has conquered the powers of Hell.

The Healing of Peter's Mother in Law. (1:29-35)

Jer. 17:24 cat. 1503-1505

the beginning of a pattern in Mark's Gospel is that an exorcism is always followed by a physical healing, which is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world defeating the hold of evil.

After the event in the Synagogue Jesus goes to the home of Simon and Andrew, they entered his life now he enters theirs in a very human way and gets involved with the family. The disciples *immediately* tell Jesus about Simon's mother-in-law, who is evidently very ill and not able to attend to the guests. Jesus as in many of his healings touches her hand and raises her up, the same phrase used at his resurrection. The reaction is that of a model disciple and she waits on them. The word Diakone is used which becomes the common term for Christian ministry. It is what Jesus himself said that he came to serve not to be served. Mk. 10:45 Women in a special way are shown as the example of this service in the Gospels. Mk.15:41, Luke 10:40, and John, 12:2.

Because of the exorcism, and the healing, crowds gather after sunset, (the end of the Sabbath), at the house bringing the possessed and sick. Jesus cures them, (*Therapeu*) the implication of this term is that Jesus spent time with them with tenderness and compassion. And he cast out many demons forbidding them to speak since they know him. This is the start of the destruction of demonic

control of the people. The casting out of evil spirits is central to Mark, showing the presence of God and the Kingdom is a reality, which is the Good News.

Alone with the Father in Prayer

Mk. 1:35-39 Ps.57:9, 88:14, 92:2 Song of Songs, 3:2-4 Cat. 520, 2599-2606

Jesus, aware that he needs to renew himself through prayer and communion with God, goes off into a deserted place. (*Ps.57:9 I will awake the dawn..*)

Simon Peter tracks him down. (Echoes of the Song of Songs) Everyone is looking for you. Jesus' reply is let us go so that I may proclaim the message through out Galilee. This is what he came for.

The Curing of a Leper

Mk.1:40-45 Lev. 13-14, Cat 2616, 1503

in the time of Jesus Leprosy was virtually a death sentence and made one ritually unclean and so forbidden from worship in the temple and contact with others. This man breaks with convention and approaches Jesus risking rejection and abuse, falls on his knees in prayer and reverence, in total confidence in the power of Jesus asks to be clean, not to be healed but to be clean and able to enter the temple. Jesus is moved with pity, and touches him. One can almost hear the gasps and sharp intake of breath of the bystanders. Jesus is not made unclean and not contaminated his holiness makes him invincible. vs.43 he cast out (the demon of Leprosy) and warns him not to say anything but to show himself to the priest and make the offering required to be allowed back into the temple.

This warning is the first example of a healed person being told to keep the 'Messianic Secret'.

But he didn't and spread the news everywhere so that Jesus could no longer go into the towns but stayed in the country. In a sense Jesus has taken on the condition of the outcast but not through being unclean since people came to him.

Physician, Bridegroom, and Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:1-3:6

Throughout the first chapter Mark portrays Jesus proclaiming the Gospel and the Kingdom of God as a physical reality backed up by his demonstrations of healing and casting out of the demons with authority. During this period in Galilee success is without conflict and opposition, but his fame is making it difficult for him to go into the towns and cities. Chapter 2 changes all that and he now faces hostility as his identity is slowly revealed.

2:1-12 Healing a paralytic

Ex.34:6-7, Sam. 12:13, Isa,43:25

Cat. 1421,1441, 1484,1502, 574,589

Jesus returns to Capernaum and Simon Peter's house. After some days, the friends of the paralytic face the obstacle of the large crowd preventing them getting to Jesus. So they climb onto the roof and lower the paralytic down having broken their way through. We do not hear any complaint from Peter or Jesus, but Jesus sees their faith. And forgives the **child** his sins. Is this a surprise response? It goes deeper to the root of a more profound paralysis and interior crippling that comes from sin. Jesus links sin to illness in line with biblical themes. Sickness, illness is contrary to God's will, but is one of the evils afflicting humanity and a result of sin, separation from the life-giving presence of God. (2Chr.26-16-21, Ps.38:2-18,107:7)

Jesus is not only saying that God forgives but showing that forgiveness is physical healing. The Scribes, trained in the Law know that this is the prerogative of God alone. (Isa.43:25, Ps.51) and think to themselves this is blasphemy. Their discomfort is sensed by Jesus, giving us the readers an insight that being able to read their hearts proves that he is and has divine knowledge and power. (1Sam16:7 Jer. 12:20, Sir. 42:18)

2:9-11 Which is easier? Saying it doesn't prove anything but the physical effect as a result of the words does. Jesus then refers to himself as the Son of Man for the first time. At the healing the paralytic rose, the same word used at the resurrection. And in a way this man has been resurrected into a new life. The crowds are astounded and praise God, but the Scribes are not happy with this show of power.

This story reflects the condition of all humans paralysed in their relationship to God, we cannot approach God in our own strength alone, we need the faith of others to carry us to Jesus in times of crisis and darkness.

The Call of Levi

2:13-17

Deut. 12:7, Jer.3:22, 17:14, Hos. 14:5

Jesus teaches the crowds by the sea. We are not told what he teaches only the effect of it, a sudden transformation of life. Follow Me! Levi, (Matthew Matt.9:9) a despised and shunned figure as a tax collector.

The tribe of Levi, was to be the priestly cast/tribe, educated and honoured as such, but without inheritance, dependant on the charity of the people in return for their religious service. Num.3:5, Eze.44:10,

Levi, perhaps had listened to the teaching of Jesus as he sat at the custom post and when Jesus called he immediately responded like the fishermen. What follows is table fellowship, sharing a common meal seals friendship and a covenant. The expectation of the Messiah is often centred on the rich banquet he provides. On one level it is assumed to be in Levi's house with him as host, but it is Jesus who assumes the role of host. Levi and other tax collectors and sinners enjoy Jesus' company and he theirs. Note that Mark points out that not only those specifically called by Jesus but many others followed him. Jesus' ability to accept sinners to be his disciples is a sign that he has the power to call people to repentance and to forgive sin. The connection between the healing of the paralytic and the call of Levi, is made as is the attitude of the religious leaders. Who are afraid to confront Jesus but go to the disciples to complain. The response that Jesus gives is a glimpse of the meaning of his mission he is the physician, the role of God the Physician who heals the chronic rebellion of the people. Jesus calls the sinner to the messianic banquet. Who are the righteous? Rom. 3:10, Ps.14:1-3 non are! Only those who know and admit it can answer the call. So this changes the whole assumption of who the Messiah is. He is not one who will come and vindicate those who keep the law and condemn the rest, rather he offers healing to all who are in need.

The Bridegroom and the new Wine

2:18-22

Jdt 8:5-6 Isa.54:5, 62:4-5, Hos.2:20-22, Joel 4:18
cat. 1434, 796

this is the 3rd conflict event in a series of 5. the middle event serves as a focus of attention for the reader. The focus on the pious leaders disapproval of lack of fasting by the disciples. Jesus now refers to himself as the bridegroom and is the key to understanding the rest of the events, connection the meal with the sinners and the purpose of his coming.

Jewish law only required fasting on the day of atonement Lv. 16:29 but the Pharisees had started to practice it twice a week as a sign of piety. John's disciples fasted as a sign of repentance. Jesus' disciples are seen now to not only feast with sinners but failing to fast. The Pharisees first complained to the disciples about Jesus now they complain to Jesus about the disciples.

Jesus' answer reveals something new about who he is. He is the Bridegroom. And the meal just shared is a wedding feast with his guests. This was a familiar image of God as a lover married to his (people) his bride who is adulterous. But God ever faithful, will espouse you to me for ever in right and justice in love and mercy and you shall know the Lord. Isa. 62:4-5, Hos. 2:20 the wedding covenant renewed and all infidelities to be washed away. So the practice of fasting would not be appropriate during such a celebration. But there is a warning that the bridegroom would be taken away. Then fasting for the disciples would resume but this time as a preparation for the messianic feast where all will have a place. This theme is re-enforced by the parable of the unshrunk cloth

on an old cloak. Showing a radical change from the old ways which cannot be patched up by adding something new. Likewise the old wineskins cannot hold the new wine. The kingdom of God is something radically new and energetic and cannot be contained in the old laws and observances.

The Lord of the Sabbath

2:23-28

Gen. 2;2-3, Ex. 20:8-11, Lev. 24:5-9, Deut. 23:26, 1Sam. 21:2-7

Cat. Sabbath 345-382, 2168-2173, the Law 547, 2173

Fast food on the Sabbath. What the disciples did was permissible as long as they did not use a tool to reap. The Pharisees pounce interpreting the law far more stringently than needed. Jesus does not answer but asks another more profound question about David in times of conflict and need. The needs of his disciples take precedence over the law. More over he is comparing himself to King David the Messiah who was being persecuted before he took up his kingship and his men are given the privilege of priests. The Sabbath was made for Man not the other way round. Any Sabbath observance that demeans humanity or hinders the relationship with God is a contradiction to the Sabbath's purpose.

Withered Hand Withered Hearts. 3:1-6

1 Macc. 2:27-41, Ezek. 3:7

This is the 5th event in the series and a climatic demonstration that he is the Lord of the Sabbath. And now the opposition to Jesus has become open hostility.

The withered hand, literally dried up and probably paralysed. The Pharisees take it for granted that Jesus can heal him, but want him to break the Sabbath law. But Jesus defies their attempt to intimidate him and his rhetorical question refers to the 1Macc 2:41 so legitimately doing good on the Sabbath super-cedes the Law when there is life at stake. A man with a withered hand cannot work and so is at risk of life. Jesus' gaze penetrates the heart that only God can see and he is angry, indignant at the evil in them. The man's hand is restored and the Pharisees response is to choose evil on the Sabbath.

The joining of forces with the Herodians shows the depth to which they have fallen.

Why did Jesus provoke them? Every healing initiated by Jesus is done on the Sabbath. Other healings on other days are initiated by the faith of friends or relatives or the sick themselves.

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and he exercises his authority by undoing the effects of sin and doing what the Sabbath is supposed to do, bring humanity into communion with God.

A new Israel and a new Family

Mark 3:7-35

Lakeside Healing 3:7-12 Zek. 8:23 Cat. 1503

In the previous section we saw that Jesus gradually reveals his identity through the power of his healings. In this section he begins to reveal a new identity for his followers as family.

In the previous chapters we saw that a gradual tension that grew into hostility from the authorities to the extent that they plot to kill him. While at first Jesus could go around unhindered he begins to avoid the synagogues and moves secretly at night back and forth across the lake. And preaches and heals in the open, by the lake. Mark points out that the people flocking to him are not only Jews but pagans from the surrounding countries and they are healed. The countries named form a circle around Galilee, to give the impression that all the world is coming to Jesus. Perhaps less to do with Jesus and his teaching but out of desperation to be made well. They are healed at a mere touch of Jesus. A note by Mark shows Jesus as being a fragile man in danger of being crushed by the crowd, hence the need to be in a boat to give breathing room. As in earlier scenes the possessed are fully aware of Jesus' divinity and kneel before him, not in worship but in obedience to his will and the demons try to control Jesus by naming him, but are silenced.

The 12 are chosen 3:13-19

Ex. 19:3 Cat 551, 765

Just as Moses went up the mountain to be given the law for the new people of God and to form Israel as a nation, Jesus goes up a mountain to prepare his followers as a new Israel and his new family of faith. This is a significant event, Mark show that Jesus is preparing for the time when he will be taken away and that his mission will be continued by his disciples/ apostles. Jesus chose those whom he wanted. A phrase that indicates his authority as Lord. He chose the 12 as a new leadership representing the 12 sons of Jacob. The commissioning of the 12 is different than the call to discipleship. These are to have the authority and role of the apostle. They are to have a close personal relationship with Jesus and to be sent out as his envoys. They are to preach and to drive out demons. Their preaching is to be backed up by action driving out demons by the authority and power of the one who has already defeated the Devil.

The Apostles are named. Simon is given the name Peter, signifying his new role and a change in destiny. The 12 are a strange group of men some of dubious character. They are to be with Jesus and to continue his mission, but that does not guarantee their safety or holiness or fidelity.

Jesus' relations think he is out of his mind

3:20-21

This is the start of another sandwich of scenes or events. Two accounts of Jesus' family thinking he had gone mad, and the scribes accusation of being in league with the devil in the middle.

Jesus returns to Capernaum and the house of Peter and Andrew. The crowds are such that even the disciples could not eat. The family of Jesus went out to restrain (seize) him, for people were saying he has gone out of his mind.

Family and an individual. In the time and place of Jesus, even today in some cultures, a person has no identity outside of the family and clan. The reputation of an individual reflects onto the whole family and vice-versa. Honour or the lack of it is all important to the clan, and to bring dishonour to it could result in severe punishment. To be out of one's mind is mental illness, which is possession by an evil spirit.

3:22-30 Jesus and Beelzebul

Isa. 5:20, 49:24-25 Cat. 1864

The Jerusalem scribes arrive and charge Jesus as being possessed by Baal the Prince of Demons. Jesus summons the scribes to him and speaks in parables. How can Satan cast out Satan? Jesus points out that the absurd charge is illogical. Then he uses the parable of the intruder of the strong man's house to show what he is doing. Jesus is the intruder the strong man is the devil and he has tied him up and now plunders the realm of the Devil. The devil's property are the possessed people Jesus sets free. The sin that cannot be forgiven. The refusal of forgiveness and redemption.

The True Family of Jesus 3:31-35

Ex.24:7, Ps.40:9, 143:10,Cat.500, 2790

Mark resumes the event of the family who come asking for Jesus. This second part now mentions the kin-folk, namely his Mother and Brothers, some translations include his Sisters. They are OUTSIDE this is mentioned twice. The crowd are packed inside surrounding Jesus. Contrary to convention, Jesus does not interrupt his teaching but asks the astonishing question who are my mother and my brothers? Then he says here they are. Those who are on the inside with him who do the will of God. Here he indicates the new criteria of kinship for him. Those outside yet have to learn this and to accept it. Physical/blood kinship takes a subordinate place to discipleship. He is establishing a new bond and relationship a new family of God based on faith and love of him stronger than any ordinary blood family bonds. Jesus is not rejecting his relations claim on him rather setting new rules for that relationship. The brothers will eventually accept and follow him. (See Acts. 1:14, 1Cor. 9:5, Gal. 1:19)

Jesus lists those who are his real family as those who do the will of the Father, they will be my brother, sister and mother. Not just sibling but mother, this shows that to be a disciple is to give

birth to the word of God, to bring forth Jesus into the world. There is no father in the list since Jesus has only one Father, God.

Parables of the Kingdom 4:1-34

Up to this point Mark has portrayed Jesus as proclaiming the Kingdom of God and showing the effects of the teaching by the casting out of demons and healing the sick, but we have not been told what Jesus taught. We have seen the reactions of different groups to this teaching, some accepting some rejecting and some wanting to kill Jesus.

The Parable of the Sower 4:1-9

Now a new theme Hear!- Listen! As we now listen to his message told in parables.

Gen. 26:12 Deut. 6:4 Cat. 546

This scene like the last Jesus gets into a boat to preach to the crowds. A parable, literally side by side. A simple story with concrete images, but with a twist in the tail-tale, constructed like a classic joke or a riddle. A hidden depth of meaning, thought provoking, memorable.

Jesus wants the people to listen to look, and to use their imagination. The Sower, a familiar scene everyone knows, nothing strange until the end and in spite of the setbacks, the amazing crop, impossible fruitfulness. He then again says listen Hear. An echo of the great Schema, 'Hear oh Israel' Deut 6:4 this hearing is not just with one's ears but with the heart, something to ponder and absorb into one's being. Jesus is speaking of his own mission and how some of his words fall on deaf ears but for those who do hear something miraculous will happen.

This parable is the key to the rest of the stories. 4:10-12 the mystery of the Kingdom.

Deut. 30:10, Isa. 6:9-10, Amos 3:7

Something that is only made clear through revelation, hidden until the right time and disposition has come. But for those who are deaf and hardened to Jesus' words, the parable is as clear as mud and unable to convert and heal them. Mark shows that God's Kingdom will not be realised easily, there will be setbacks and hostility and failures but in the end it will happen.

The lamp that must be seen. 4:21-25

Here are two pairs of sayings, kind of proverbs with the listen and hear command in the middle.

The lamp is Jesus bringing light and to reveal the mystery the hidden kingdom present in himself.

The measure you give is what you get. The more one gives time and attention to these teachings the more one will get understanding from God.

Those who have... those who have nothing. Very strange, but this is not about fairness. It is about those who have an openness and a desire to learn and understand, more will be given, in contrast to

those who have little openness and no desire to hear or listen to Jesus they will lose what little understanding they have. Revelation is a gift that must be accepted for it to develop and bear fruit.

The growing seed 4:26-29

Joel 4:11-16 the Mystery of the seed's growth, how and why it does, who knows, by its own power? The farmer only tends it with patience and trust and cannot make it grow but has to be ready when it does ripen. This is a metaphor for the kingdom and final judgement. The growth of the kingdom is a divine work not human, we can only cooperate in trust and patience.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32

Ezek. 17:23, 31:6, Dan. 4:9

With what can we compare the Kingdom of God?

A Mustard seed! Comparing the Kingdom to a tiny seed must have been a surprise to the Jewish people. They were expecting a mighty powerful King and angelic armies to defeat their enemies. The smallness is contrasted to the largest of the bushes that can house birds. From humble, origins to something great. The image of the lofty tree that gives shade to nations EzeK. 17:23 again this shows that it is by God's power and way that the kingdom grows not by human will or design. The disciples are encouraged to have patience and trust in God.

The Purpose of Parables 4:33-34

Deut. 6:4, Cat. 546

The last part of this chapter Mark points out again the mystery by the use of parables. The kingdom cannot be defined in human language or terms. To understand it one has to Hear and Listen not just with ears but the heart, accept and absorb and grow in understanding. Chapter 4 has this phrase to listen to hear 13 times. Mark shows the importance of gradual growth and awakening to the real meaning of Jesus' words, it takes patience and effort and at times even failure to understand, but understanding will come. It is not enough to just listen to sermons or even to read commentaries, one needs to and must come to Jesus and ask in humility for help.

Authority over Nature, Demons, Disease and Death

Mk. 4:35-5:43

Jesus Calms the Storm 4:35-41

Ps. 4:9, 65:8, 89:10, 107:28-30 Jonah 1

The following section is a demonstration of the awesome power of Jesus over humanity's primal fears and dangers.

Jesus having finished teaching in parables crosses the sea to the Gentile country of the Gerasenes.

But the storm threatens to sink them and the seasoned fishermen are afraid. For some commentaries the first miracle here is that Jesus is asleep during a violent storm. Job. 11:18 Jesus has total child like trust in God and can rest in serenity. Not so the disciples. Here for the first time they call him teacher, after a day of teaching, perhaps they kind of understand that he can do something about their fear if not about the storm. Mark here perhaps is reflecting on the way the church is being

tossed and shaken by the storms of persecution and to some, it seems Jesus is asleep to their fears and danger. The lesson here is that Jesus is in control, and even though there are trials those who trust can never really be harmed.

Gerasenes Demoniac 5:1-13

Deut.14:8

Jesus after calming the storm arrives at a Gentile area, at the site of tombs. There are many references to this being an unclean place and a place haunted by demons and evil. And the man possessed runs out to meet Jesus. Mark describes the man in a detailed way that suggests eye witness. He bows down before Jesus 'Son of the most High. Again an attempt to control Jesus, by his knowledge of the divine. do not torment me. The demon has been tormenting the man for years. Society had tried to deal with him by binding him without success. 'Bound' the same word used by Jesus about overcoming the strong man, the Devil.

The demoniac appears conflicted, recognises the power of Jesus, pleads and bargains yet challenges realizing that the demonic power over humanity in that place is over. Legion reflecting the evil of many demons or of the Roman occupation. Like the ancient enemy of Egypt they are drowned in the sea. The death of so many pigs is of no concern for Jesus or the Jews. What is more important is the restoration to humanity of the possessed man. Possession, corrupts the image of God in humanity only the Son of God can heal and restore that image.

Being a witness to Christ 5:14-20

the swineherds tell the people of the area and they come and find the demoniac *sitting, clothed and in his right mind*. Symbolic of his healing and restoration. They beg Jesus to leave them. They are seized with fear.

The healed man begs to be allowed to go with Jesus, but told to go home and tell how much the Lord has done for him. He is the first Christian missionary to the pagans.

A father's plea 5:21-24

Another sandwich of events. Jesus returns to the other side to the place the Scribes had decided to Kill Jesus. Now Jairus a synagogue leader bows before Jesus and begs him repeatedly to heal his daughter. The man is desperate and in spite of the threat of official opposition to Jesus he humbles himself and asks that she may live. Jesus goes with him.

Triumph over Disease 5:25-34

the middle story of the sandwich, the woman with a haemorrhage. She has a horrible condition that made her ritually and physically unclean and an outcast and was getting worse and probably close to death. Or as good as dead to society. Her faith in Jesus or in her desperation for a miracle makes her very bold and risks abuse or worse just to touch the clothes of Jesus. He senses that power has gone out of him. He does not want her to slip away he wants an encounter with her a relationship. He calls her daughter, like those who do the will of God. Go in peace, Shalom, total harmony and well-being.

Triumph over death. 5:35-43

the first story of Jairus' daughter continues. The news that she had died is met by Jesus saying have faith. Faith is the disposition that allows Jesus' power to be most effective. He takes only his inner circle and the parents, she is only asleep. Is this denying she is dead or that way scripture speaks of death as sleep, not a finality of extinction. Mark records the actual words in Aramaic. She rises immediately. He gives strict orders to keep it quiet. Mark is preparing the readers for the magnitude of Jesus' conquest over death.

Jesus Comes to his Own Mk.6:1-32

Unbelief at Nazareth 6:1-5

In the first 5 chapters Jesus' mission throughout Galilee and the surrounding countries has been relentless in opposing the reign of evil. Recognised by demons and evil spirits and believed in by the sick, disabled and invalid, opposition by the authorities and establishment, notwithstanding the kingdom of God is being proclaimed in word and deed.

Now for the first time we see Jesus returning to his home village where he grew up. As usual he goes to the Synagogue to teach. As in other places the initial response is astonishment at his wisdom and apparent authority, but then unbelief and offence (scandal) at his putting on airs above his station. They question him as to where did he get it all, not a question to learn the truth but in indignation. Wisdom and Mighty deeds are attributed to God.(Jer.10:12; 51:15, Dan.2:20) The people of Nazareth think they know Jesus, what he is, the son of Mary! Could this be a slur on his conception before his parent were married? Or just that Joseph was no longer alive? Whatever, this attitude of preconceived ideas about Jesus prevented them from hearing, seeing and understanding, making them like his blood relations, outsiders.

Jesus responds by likening himself to a prophet in his own house. In the history of Israel there is a long line of prophets who suffered because of the message they bore. He came to his own , but they did not accept him (Jn.1:11) this shows the totally ordinary man Jesus appeared to be. No one could see the secret within. Least of all those closest to him.

This unbelief prevented many from being healed, except those he personally touched. Mark is pointing out the need for an open attitude, disposition to the work of God through Jesus. It is not diminishing the power of God but showing that there must be a faith and belief that is needed for receiving a real healing. The door to human hearts is faith that can only be opened from inside.

How would we react if we lived in Nazareth at that time? How do we treat people we think we know or grew up with, having not seen them in years?

The Mission of the 12 (6:7-13)

Cat.2, 551,858 anointing the sick 1499-1523
(another sandwich)

The calling of the 12 earlier pointed out that they were to be with Jesus, that is to be his companions and friends, learning and growing together how to become fishers of people.

Now they are 'sent out', Apostles. They are witnesses to the teaching and work of Jesus. Now they must do the same. Jesus began to send them out two by two. Began, not all at once. Each pair given the authority over unclean spirits and to heal. The strange order to travel light, with no provisions except a staff. A staff is often a symbol of authority (Ex. 4:20; Mic.7:14) and still to be dependant on the hospitality of those they go to. This is a principle of the early Church. Also there is a sense of urgency in the way they are sent. Like a courier or herald running to bring urgent news.

The stakes of accepting or rejecting the apostles is grave. Refusal is to reject the invitation to eternal life. No one can be forced to accept the message. Shaking off the dust is a symbolic act of Jews leaving a pagan country, the soil of Israel is regarded as holy so to clean one's feet on entering holy soil is only right. Failure to convert or to be accepted is not to be a concern the success of the mission is in the hands of God.

Beheading of John the Baptist (6:14-29)

1Kings 19:2; Sir.48:9-12, Mal. 3:23-24

this is another seemingly disjointed event put in the middle of a story/

this is put here deliberately to point out that John the Baptist's life and death is a prefiguring of Jesus'.

John had condemned Herod for his adultery. The behaviour of the rulers and leaders affect the moral environment of the country, and John's call to make straight the path included challenging such behaviour, which put his life at risk.

The Return of the 12 6:30-32

Ex. 33:14; Deut. 12:10; Isa. 40:31 Cat. 2184, Rest

the apostles report to Jesus all they had done and taught. And after such an intense time of mission the 12 need rest and renewal and so back to the desert for a time of intimacy with Jesus. This little scene is a model of good mission activity. Being with Jesus, being sent on a period of intense work, returning to report and reflect and renew with new encouragement and prayer. To reflect on the mission as the work of the Lord not ours.

Understanding the Bread 6:33-7:37

In this section bread appears 17 times. Mark has arranged it so as to reveal the mystery of Jesus centred on the theme of Bread. (Mk. 6:33-8:26) the reader is being prepared to get the meaning of the Eucharistic banquet and the passion and Glory of the Son of Man.

The Compassion of Jesus 6:33-34

Sir. 15:3; Isa. 40:11; Jer, 31:10; Ezek. 34:11-16

Even though Jesus and the disciples went off to a lonely place, the people anticipated where they were going and got there before them and they were confronted by a vast crowd. So, no retreat. What we are shown is the compassion of Jesus he was moved with pity (a gut wrenching feeling)

Pity and compassion are attributes of God see the Psalms, Isaiah, and Hosea.

Sheep without a shepherd, common phrase of a leaderless people or people ruled in incompetence. Jesus responds by healing through teaching, liberating them from evil and feeding them with the good news.

Feeding the 5,000 6:35-44

Num. 11:13-22; 2Kings 4:42-44; Isa.55:1-2

this story appears in all 4 gospels. In Mark it is not only food but a revelation of the identity of Jesus. Every sentence is a reference to the OT. The disciples fail to understand that they are in a deserted place the wilderness where God provided in abundance the food, the Manna, the people needed. Bread from Heaven. Deut. 8:3 'not by bread alone...' The crowds are told to sit on the green grass, an allusion to the green pastures, Ps.23.2, Isa. 34:1; Ezek. 34:25-31, God transforms the desert into a place of refreshment. Ex. 18:21-25 the tribes of Israel are ordered in rows of 50 and 100. mark is showing the reader that there is an new Exodus happening. And a new bread from heaven.

The actions of Jesus with the bread is a form of Eucharistic meal that the readers would be familiar with. Jesus prays looking up to heaven, towards the father. Kept Giving, continuous giving to the disciples for them to distribute. All ate and were satisfied. The leftovers, 12 baskets, 12 tribes an new Israel.

Jesus Walks of Water 6:45-52

This scene is the same in Mark, Matthew and John. The disciples are tested to go ahead to Bethsaida on the North of the Lake. Jesus stays and prays on the mountain. The alarm and fear the disciples experience now is not from the sea and wind but the sight of Jesus. Do not be afraid it is I (I AM). They are astounded and still do not understand. Their hearts were hardened. Reluctant to open themselves to believe what they have witnessed God doing in Jesus.

Touching the tassel of his cloak 6:53-56

instead of landing at Bethsaida the land at Gennesaret. Was the journey more important than the destination or was this the intention? The people of the region immediately recognise Jesus and bring him the sick begging him to heal them by touch. The tassel, tzitzit, on the corners of the Jewish shawl. This is the place where the people previously asked Jesus to go away. The once Demoniac has been preaching about the wonders God is doing through Jesus.

Clean Hands, Distant hearts (7:1-8)

EX.30:17-21; ISA. 29:13

These verses of chapter 7 form the centre of the first part of the bread section and renewed hostility by the authorities. Now we see a transformation in God's covenant relationship. The joining of the Jerusalem scribes and the Pharisees to find fault with Jesus and his disciples. The scandal over the way they 'ate breads'. This is a link with the 5,000 who 'ate breads'. Perhaps alluding to the crowds eating in the deserted place with out washing. It is also a reference to the early Church situation where gentile Christians were being obliged to observe the Jewish laws and traditions. Not a matter of hygiene but of ritual purity. Unclean, (koinos) common, profane, not holy. What was intended as ritual purity for priests and Levites the Pharisees had extended to include all Jews. Jesus' response is not to argue for exceptions but to counter accuse, and to call them play actors, paying lip service but with hearts elsewhere. Isa. 29:13 the punch-line Jesus makes is scathing condemnation of their approach to religion making it their agenda disregarding God's.

Jesus is not condemning tradition per se, but that which is merely human tradition. Mark is also showing the early Church's beginning to adopt forms of piety and practice over genuine obedience to the word of God.

Hypocrisy 7:9-13

Ex.20:12; 21:17, Num. 30:3, Sir.3:1-16.

Is it right to set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition? (*Corban, to sacrifice.*)

Jesus repeats the charge 3 times to drive home his point. Mark is making this point to the readers the young church which could easily fall into legalistic and hollow piety

What comes from within 7:14-23

Lev. 11

This third section is the climax. Jesus goes back to answer the question about eating without washing. He call the crowd to him. Hear Me... the discussion is widened beyond just washing he changes the concept of large sections of the Law. Defile, in the Torah means to make something or someone unclean. Jesus now makes the condition of defilement an interior attitude not and external act. There is a distinction between the crowds and the disciples. A disciple bases ones life on a relationship with Jesus. But they have no better understanding than the crowds.

The heart (kardia) biblically represents the inner depth of a person and the source of choice and thought and conscience Jer. 17:5-10

Jesus says that ceremonial cleanliness doesn't make one pure of heart. The list of 6 acts that really make one unclean or sin are plural. The second list of 6 are singular meaning an interior attitude or disposition. So defilement is now no longer ceremonial but moral and matters of the heart. And all foods are made clean.

The children's bread 7:24-30

Immediately after this teaching there are 2 healings of Gentiles.

The Syrophenician woman, a crucial story, breaks the barrier of ritual isolation of non Jews and anticipates the Church where Jew and Gentile can share the same bread at the Eucharistic table. But the early Church continued to preach first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. This woman full of hope and courage is the only person in Mark to address Jesus as Lord! This encounter enables Jesus to give the children's bread to a Gentile. It is the only exorcism done at a distance in Mark. The only other healing at distance is in Matt. 8:5-13 the centurion's servant another Gentile.

Open Ears 7:31-37

Ex.4:11; Isa. 34:4-6; Wis.10:21

Jesus moves to the Gentile lands of the Decapolis, in a wide circle avoiding Jewish lands. The healing of the deaf mute is only found in Mark and is one of the most graphic stories of physical healing. 'The flesh is the hinge of salvation' (Tertullian *Resurrection of the Flesh*)

In this story we see the only example of Jesus Groaning, perhaps at the sight of someone so trapped and disabled. This healing made a deep impression on the disciples since they recall the actual words of power Ephphatha, be opened. Oddly Jesus tells the man who has just been given back his speech to be silent about the healing. The full truth about the messiah will be revealed later.

The physical human faculties needs to be healed, restored to their intended purposes. It is the only way we can communicate with the world around us, to perceive and learn through our environment the wonders of God. To see and perceive, to listen and hear to understand, to touch and be touched to experience love and intimacy to taste and see that the Lord is Good, to believe and be saved.

Understanding the Bread 2

Mk. 8:1-26

Feeding of the 4,000 8:1-10

Deut. 8:3; Ps.103:13; 145:15 Cat. 1335

In spite of many commentaries suggesting that this story is a repeat of the earlier feeding of the 5,000, this has many differences, the location is gentile land the people have been with Jesus for 3 days, Jesus takes the initiative, instead of blessing the bread he gave thanks (Eucharist), he takes what they have and gives it back to the disciples to distribute. They ate and were satisfied. 7 baskets of leftovers. (7 gentile nations). After dismissing the crowds he gets into the boat with the disciples and crosses the Lake again.

Demand for a sign. 8:11-13

Ex. 17:2; Num. 14:11; Deut. 29:1-3; Ps.95:8-10

The Pharisees confront Jesus and demand a sign from heaven to validate his works. The crowds and the pagans all accepted that Jesus' miraculous acts were from God, but the 'holy men' refuse to. What more could they want for proof. A cosmic event? Such a demand seems to indicate they want God to follow their ideas of what the messiah should be and act.

From the depth of his spirit Jesus sighs in distress. They seem to be demanding that Jesus force them to believe so as not to need a change of heart or to have faith. God will always invite faith but never force. This is the end of the Galilean ministry.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod 8:14-21

Jer.5:21; Ezek.12:2

Once again in the boat the disciples do not understand what has been happening. They are dull minded but they unlike the Pharisees are still with Jesus and willing to learn. No bread, Only one loaf? One Bread, Jesus. The leaven, the yeast the spiritual yeast that fills people with hypocrisy and ill will. Recall the exodus the Hebrew had to clear their homes of leaven before the passover.

Gradual healing of a blind man 8:22-26

Isa. 41:13

this healing is the only one done in parts. But it is placed here deliberately as a book-end to the previous healing of the deaf mute where the profession of faith was made (9:37). Both events are very similar in structure the leading of the person outside the town and the use of spittle and laying on of hands. And the order to say nothing. There is an understanding gradually emerging for the disciples.

On the Way of Discipleship 1 Mk. 8:27-9:29**Who do You say I am? 8:27-30**

Deut. 18:15; Mal. 3:23-24

Peter's confession at this place is significant and a place of worship of pagan gods, Baal and Caesar. It is also a hinge marking the end of the Bread section and start of the travel section. The Way.

God had led the people on the Way to the promised land now Jesus does the same.

Who do people say I am? The many ideas that seem to be around, such as the returning prophet, or John the Baptist reincarnated, none seem to indicate Jesus as the Messiah.

The next question is aimed not only at the disciples but at everyone who reads this Gospel. Who do you say I am? You are the Messiah says Peter, and then they are told not to tell anyone about him.

The healing of the blind man earlier is symbolic that such an insight could only come from God. The understanding of Messiah at that time was that the anointed one would be a descendant of King David or an Aaronic super priest, or a super prophet like Moses.

Prophecy of the death of Jesus. 8:31-33

Isa. 52:13-53; Dan. 9:26

this prediction of his death and resurrection is a dramatic response to Peter's profession but this death is not a defeat but a new beginning, the prophet Hosea 6:1-2.

Peter's rebuke, it was unthinkable that the Messiah would be defeated or suffer and he would not allow it to happen. Jesus responds to point out the error of that kind of thinking. Peter cannot be the leader if he tries to tell Jesus what to do. He must be the one that follows behind...

the Cost of Discipleship 8:34-9:1

Job 2:4; Ps.49:8-10

Jesus Now teaches the people as well as the disciples that those who follow him must share in the suffering of the Messiah. The messianic secret is now open. The invitation is now open to everyone but the cost is explicit in the six statements about following Jesus. Take up the cross. The Christian paradox that death leads to life.

The Transfiguration

Mk. 9:2-8

Ex.24:15-17, 1Kgs. 8:10-12 Cat. 554-556

We have arrived at the half way point of the Gospel and there is a new beginning and a new revelation. The first part started with the Baptism of Jesus and the voice of God. Here is Jesus transformed into his true self and a voice from God.

This event comes 6 days after Peter's profession of faith and the prophesy of Jesus' passion. 6 Days God's cloud covered Horeb before God spoke to Moses. Ex.24:15-17.

Jesus was transfigured into his full majesty even his clothes dazzling white.

The figures of Moses and Elijah showing the fullness of the Old Testament. The law and the prophets bear witness to Jesus and Messiah and Son of God.

Peter want to make 3 tents. Reflecting the feast of Tabernacles Lev. 23:39-43.

The Cloud, a visible sign of God's presence, often a sign of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, cloud and shadow are the same word to cast a shadow to overshadow, cloud covering the tent of meeting, the tabernacle in the desert and in the temple. This is the new tabernacle, Jesus and his disciples, are the new symbol of God's permanent presence.

God's speaks 'This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him!' (Deut. 18:15)

Elijah 9:9-13

1Kgs. 19:1-2; 2Kgs.2:11; Sir. 48:10; Mal. 3:23-24

They come down from the mountain. Jesus puts into perspective the experience they had, that the vision of Glory comes at a price and the humiliation of the Cross. Elijah must come at the day of the Lord, and indeed came as John the Baptist.

Everything is Possible. Healing a boy with a spirit 9:14-29

As in the first part of the Gospel, after the baptism, and the voice of God's affirmation, Jesus is confronted with evil, immediately after the affirmation on the mountain. This is the last exorcism in Mark and symbolises the purpose and aim of Jesus, to free humanity from the domination of evil and to resurrect the dead. This spirit is mute. And the symptoms look like epilepsy. The disciples are unable to heal in spite of having the authority, though a lack of faith? Stubborn lack of faith in the face of God's mercy. The disciples bring the boy to Jesus, the pattern for future ministry. The father is questioned and the boy's innocence is established, the spirit is evil and malevolent, driving the boy to suicide.

If you can! Everything is possible to one with faith. The only limit to healing is the lack of faith. The evil spirit is powerless before the command of Jesus. The crowds assume the boy to be dead, but Jesus takes his hand and raises him up.

The disciples have forgotten that they need to depend completely on God, re; Prayer, and not on formulas and self reliance.

On the way of Discipleship 2

9:3-50

2nd Prophecy of the Passion 9:30-32

Jesus now privately teaches his disciples continuously. And still they did not understand.

The Son of man will be handed over... Isa. 53:12, not a helpless victim but one who handed himself over. This is not a gloomy story since the suffering is only a prelude to the glory of the resurrection.

It is totally beyond any preconceived ideas of the Messiah they had. And defied logic. Human Logic.

Who is the Greatest 9:33-37

Isa.29:19; Zeph.2:3

Once again they arrive at Peter's house, but this time for the Last time.

If anyone wants to be first... to have priority over others. Humility and meekness were not seen as virtues but weakness. The word for child in Aramaic and in Greek can be used as servant. This is overturning the values of the day. Jesus identified with those the world considered insignificant.

Another Exorcist 9:38-41

Someone used the name of Jesus to drive out demons. Someone who did not follow US. (Not follow you.) Num. 11;24-29 Do not prevent him. There must be an attitude of openness towards those who are not formally within the bonds of Christian Community.

Temptation to Sin 9:42-48

Deut. 30:19-20; 2Macc. 7.;Isa. 66 24

those who lead the little ones astray also the weak and vulnerable. The condemnation is harsh but is a warning against sin and the consequences of evil. Total separation from God.

A hand or foot or eye dose not cause sin, sin comes from within see Mk.7:17-23

Salt 9:49-50

Ex.30:35; Job 6:6 ;Ezek. 43:24

There are 3 sayings on salt. It is a word association teaching aid. Salted with fire. Salt preserves and seasons Salt makes one thirsty. Temple sacrifices had to be offered with salt. Here the balance with the fire of Hell and the salt of fire. See salt as fervour as opposed to mediocrity. To have peace is to have salt in oneself humility and unity with Jesus. What makes salt tasteless is the attachment to self and desire for human recognition and compromise with sin.

The Gospel in Daily Life Mk. 10:1-31

Marriage 10:1-12

Gen. 1:27, 2:24; Deut. 24:1-4; Mal. 2:14-16

For the first time since the baptism in the Jordan, Jesus returns to Judea leaving Galilee for the last time. He also now continues his teaching to the crowds. The Pharisees try to trap him with a question on his attitude to divorce. Divorce was commonly acceptable but not always clear on what grounds. Typically, Jesus replies with a question. what did Moses Command? Moses made no such laws on divorce, however, in Deut. 24:1-4 the only mention of divorce was the writ, freeing the wife from any legal claims the husband may make on her. This is a kind of protection for the woman allowing her to live on her own or freeing her to marry again. This was because of the hardness of hearts that it was allowed. References to Israel's repeated infidelity with God. Jesus then refers to the Book of Genesis the creation account. In the biblical thought the flesh is the whole person, visible in the physical world so 'one flesh / Body' means the total union in the deepest level of being. This link indicates that the communion of Love between man and woman is a symbol of God's union with us, since we are created in God's image.

Jesus is also saying that the concession of Deut. 24, is now obsolete since humanity is no longer a slave of evil and sin. The kingdom of God is now present in the world. The marriage bond is no longer just a human convention, but a bond from God.

The disciples find this hard to grasp. And wonder why Jesus is making life harder? But Jesus is restoring God's plan for Humanity.

Blessing Children 10:13-16

Gen.48:14-16; Ps.115:14-14;

People were bringing children to Jesus to touch them. But the disciples prevented them. Jesus is indignant and rebukes them for getting in the way of access to God's blessings. To receive the kingdom like a child is to enter into a relationship with Jesus.

The Rich man 10:17-22

Exodus 20:12-17; Tob.4:7-11; Sir. 29:8-12

Jesus was setting out on a journey and the rich man stops him with the question how to get/inherit eternal life, he wants this through his own efforts. It is not enough to just follow the law, one must let go of and give up something for the sake of the Kingdom. Eternal life was a relatively new concept. But the deeper question is what is the meaning of life what is the purpose of life? What does God want us to be? The man's question suggests that he is not happy with the traditional answers that the Law is the way, he is looking for something more.

On what basis does the rich man call Jesus Good? Does he recognise the fact that goodness belongs to God alone. Jesus lists the attributes of Law in part relating to human relationships.

Jesus loved him! The only time in the Gospel that Jesus looked with love on an individual (agape). But the man seems not to have noticed this loving look. He is too preoccupied with his possessions. To let go and follow Jesus. By letting go of his possessions and giving to the poor is to store up

treasure in Heaven. The only time an individual refuses the invitation to become a disciple. The other disciples were not asked to give up their property, Peter kept his house and boat.

Hard for the Rich to enter heaven 10:23-27

Deut. 32:15; Ps.49; Hos.12:9

a warning against spiritual complacency and self reliance avoiding surrender to God. The disciples are amazed, in the scriptures wealth was considered a sign of God's favour, Deut 28:1-14 Ps.25:12-13 Sir. 11:21-22. but there are also warnings against the snares of wealth, Deut.32:15; Ps.49: 52:9; Prov. 11:28. Wealth and power create a false sense of security and block the way to the Kingdom. Jesus addresses them as children, a reminder of how to enter the way. Again Jesus repeats himself adding that it is hard even impossible for anyone, driving home the point by the saying of Camel and needle. The disciples were exceedingly astounded and asked who then can be *saved*? (Saved from eternal death, enter the Kingdom enter eternal life.)

All things are possible for God. Salvation cannot be earned or claimed as a right. Only through the goodness of God. (magnificat).

The rewards of discipleship 10:28-31

Gen. 12:1-3

Peter speaks as spokesman that they have given up everything. (Greek *aphiemi* =release, let go, give up) but they are still attached to some things and attitudes. Jesus' promise to them a great reward on a radically different level, like the parable of the seed a hundred fold. But not only in the future life but here and now. The bonds of being sister and brother with Jesus the family of faith. Persecutions will however, be a reality. Those who are first will be last and the last first. A reversal of perceived wisdom of values

On the Way of Discipleship III. 10:32-52

3rd Passion prophesy 10:32-34 Isa. 53:12

On the way to Jerusalem. Going up idiom Jesus is going ahead of them. The disciples were amazed and afraid. Many reasons, the resolve of Jesus knowing that he could be killed giving the details of how it would happen. How he will be Handed Over, and the assurance that he would rise again in glory.

The request of James and John 10:35-45

1Kigs. 22;19; Isa. 51:17-22

had they heard what Jesus said or understood him. Their request was so tactless. Did they understand what Glory meant? They wanted the prime share in it before the others got some.

Jesus spells out what it means sharing his cup and his baptism. Here is an allusion to two of the sacraments Baptism and Eucharist. The others are angry. Then the teaching on the new type of

leadership a leadership of service. The son of man did not come to be served....
 the most important phrase of Jesus that sums up his mission. His life as a ransom for many.

Healing of Bartimaeus 10;46-52

isa.29:18; 35:5

At the start of the journey to Jerusalem, the gradual healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, Now at the end of the journey leaving Jericho and just before the entrance into the Jerusalem, Bartimaeus is healed. He sits on the side of the road in social isolation. For the first time in the Gospel the title Son of David is used. The messiah King. As usual there are obstacles to getting to Jesus. But he is determined to get to Jesus, who cannot ignore such faith. And immediately sight is restored. Unlike James and John he does not ask for any special honour only that he may see and be restored to wholeness. To save to heal the same word.

This passage for Mark frames the journey to Jerusalem as a symbol of the spiritual healing of the blindness of the disciples. They still do not fully grasp who Jesus is and what it means to be a disciple, full sight will only come after the resurrection.

There are many symbols in this passage that needs to be unpacked. Jericho, one of the oldest cities in the world, inhabited for at least 8,000 years, it is 850 ft. below sea-level. It is the first city that the Hebrew people led by Joshua captured on entry to the holy land. It had become a symbol of pagan and corrupt life style. There are many people on the road with Jesus, pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Bartimaeus recognises Jesus, although blind he sees more than the disciples, 'Jesus son of David have pity on me' (Isa. 29:18, 35:5 Ps. 6:3, 89:21-38. The basis of the Jesus prayer, "*Lord Jesus Christ Son of the Living God have mercy on Me a Sinner*"

In-spite of the people telling him shut up, he is determined to be heard. Jesus responds to that faith and tells to disciples to call him. Who needs to be encouraged? Bartimaeus of the disciples.

He casts off his cloak symbolic of leaving his former life behind. After being healed he follows Jesus.

The Lord Comes into his Temple Mk. 11:1-33

Jesus arrives at Jerusalem as a Humble King. This is the beginning of Holy week and the final third of Mark's Gospel is devoted to this week.

Mk. 11:1-11 1Kngs 1:32-34, 1Macc. 13:51, Ps.118:25-26, Zech. 9:9 Catechism.559-560

Even though the other Gospels speak of Jesus visiting Jerusalem many times, Mark makes this event as the most important as the last stage of his life's journey and resolute purpose.

The Messiah King enters the Holy City from Bethphage and Bethany the Mount of Olives. It is from there that according to Zechariah 14:4-9, the King of the whole world, Yahweh would be revealed. Not as a warrior but humble, riding the colt of a donkey. Zech. 9:9.

The detailed preparation for his entry into Jerusalem made by Jesus is highly symbolic full of Old Testament signs. Having rejected the popular image of Messiah, he emphasises his understanding of what kind of Messiah he is. The disciples are instructed to use the term the Lord (ho Kyrios) this is the term the Septuagint uses for God. It is the only time in this Gospel that Jesus uses this term of himself revealing explicitly his divinity. These elaborate preparations indicate that he is totally in control of the unfolding events.

Hosannah, originally a Hebrew word meaning 'save us!' but through liturgical usage has become a shout of praise. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord and the restoration of the kingdom of David.

The Fruitless Fig Tree Mk.11:12-14 (Hos. 9:10, Mic. 7:1)

This is a strange little story that seems out of place and yet... Jesus is hungry, and looks for fruit, but it is not the season for it. Figs ripen in June. The fruit Jesus wants is righteousness and faith. See Mic. 7:1. the Temple and its leaders are condemned as fruitless, useless.

The Cleansing of the Temple Mk. 11-15-19. Ps. 69:10, Jer. 7:1-15, Zech. 14-21 Cat. 583-586-2580

Some commercial trade was necessary around the temple rituals such as purchase of ritually clean animals for sacrifice, changing of currency for ritually acceptable coin for temple tax. However, in the day of Jesus, this had become big business inside the court of the Gentiles. The Temple was supposed to sanctify the city, but the city had corrupted and desecrated it. Jesus cleans house as in Zech. 14:21. this is the 3rd symbolic act of Jesus and he explains that the trading inside the courts prevented people from prayer and worship for the gentiles. This was a direct challenge to the Priests and authorities and to their income. They had rationalised their greed by emphasising ritual over the command that the temple be a place of prayer for all people.

The Withered Fig Tree Mk. 11;20-25 Ezek. 17:24, Hos. 2:1-14, Joel 1:7-12 Cat. 2609, 2734-2745

The withered tree symbolised the state of the Temple and its leaders, not only barren but like the tree dead. Peter marvels at the power of Jesus. A new tree must appear the tree of life. Prayer without real faith is only empty words, but with faith anything is possible. The temple is to be replaced with a living one, the disciples of Jesus. The basis of our confidence in God answering our prayer is that God Loves us as a forgiving, caring Father. In order to open ourselves to God's mercy

we must be willing to forgive others their debts and faults. We must work on our relationship with God, build up an alignment with His will for us so that our prayer is not contrary to it, but that his will and designs become ours.

The Authority of Jesus. Mk. 11:27-33 Mic. 6:3

For the 3rd time Jesus enters the temple with his disciples. He is confronted with the 3 groups that he predicted will have him killed, the Priests, scribes and the elders. They ask on whose authority has he acted by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and his chasing the traders out of the temple. But Jesus in true rabbinical form asks a question about John the Baptist's authority. They wanted him to admit that he did not have their permission to do that. The irony is that they are the temple stewards and they are challenging the Lord of the Temple. When Jesus demands an answer from them it is the Lord calling the stewards to account. They were looking for what human authority Jesus had while Jesus asks by what Authority had they rejected John's divine call to repentance. They are caught and cannot answer yes or no. to accept that John was sent by God is to accept Jesus, to deny it is to deny he was a prophet and martyr. Their motives are exposed as purely a human desire to maintain the status-quo of power and control over the Temple and religious practice.

The parable of the Rejected Son Mk. 12:1-10 Gen. 37:20, Ps. 80:9-12, Isa. 5:1-7

Addressing them again Jesus tells the story of the vineyard owner, the tenants and his son. And to enforce the message to those who are outside his circle, he quotes from Ps.118:22-23.

The Vineyard an allegory of Isaiah 5:1-7 God's relationship with an unfaithful Israel. The tenants Israel's leaders, the crop/first fruits the conduct of the people, the servants, the prophets and finally the beloved son is sent. Finally/ last of all, (eschaton) when the time is ripe. Like all parables there is a twist in the tail. How stupid is the Landowner to send his beloved son when the tenants have abused and killed his servants. The reasoning of the tenants is about inheritance law when there is no heir the land will become the tenants. The plot to kill the son is an echo of Gen.37:20. Then Jesus asks the question what will the Land owner do to the tenants. The new tenants are the disciples of Jesus the new Israel.

The parable of the rejected stone. Mk.12:11-12 Ps.118.22-23

this psalm is the one sung by pilgrims entering the Temple and indeed is that by which Jesus was led in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem by the crowds. The word rejected is the same as that used by Jesus in his first passion prediction Mk.8:31. The chief Priests, scribes and Elders have no trouble in understanding that these parables are references to themselves. But they refuse to repent and do what the parables predict the plot to Kill Jesus.

Caesar or God Mk. 12:13-17 Gen, 1:27, Ps. 95:9, Jer. 18:18

A new group are sent to challenge Jesus, some Pharisees and Herodians. The Pharisees were totally opposed to the Roman occupation and were politically opposite to the Herodians who had a vested interest in cooperation with Rome being followers of Herod Antipas. Somehow, their differences were overcome to join forces in trying to get rid of Jesus. Their clever question about the Tax was

seemingly a no win scene for Jesus. Agreeing to or rejecting the tax would be grounds to condemn Jesus from either party. (But as a Galilean, Jesus was not subject to the Tax anyway). The response was genius by asking whose image was on the coin, some-ones image on the coin implies that it belongs to that person, while people are in the image of God, and so Belong to Him.

Resurrection from the dead. Mk12:18-27 Ex.3:6, Deut.25:5-6, Tobit 3:7-20

Now some Sadducees question Jesus about rising from the dead, They are a group who reject the idea of life eternal, resurrection, spirits and angels and even the prophets and traditions of the elders.. And try to show his teaching as illogical. They use a Mosaic law of the brother or brother-in-law obliged to marry the widow as an example.

Jesus' answer is direct, they are in error on two counts they do not know the scriptures and they underestimate the power of God. To be the God of someone is to be in a relationship with someone who exists, alive. Resurrection of the body will be physical but different and there will be no taking in marriage since the purpose of this will be completed. The risen will be like angels.

The great Commandment. Mk 12:28-34 lev.19:18, Deut. 6:4-5

This confrontation with the scribe is different, this man is sincere and is honest in his question and not trying to trap Jesus. As a lawyer, his job is to discover the true meaning of the Law and help people understand and keep it. Law is intended to lead people to worship and the 10 Commandments are the ideal of worship. The core in that of Deuteronomy 6:4-5. is what Jesus says and links it to Lev.19:18 to love ones' neighbour as oneself. Jesus adds the word mind to the law and the scribe picks that up to be understanding and then makes a startling statement that this is more important than all the sacrifices, saying this while surrounded by priests and Pharisees was very risky. By including the mind in this law Jesus is saying that we must try to make all of our thought and reason animated by love of God and God's love for us. Rational thought cannot be ignored.

David's Son and Lord Mk. 12:35-37 Ps.89:21-38, 110:1, Jer. 23:5-6

The last sentence of the previous passage "After that no one dared to ask him any questions."

it seems that the opponents of Jesus had been silenced or could not think of any other way to challenge Jesus. Now Jesus takes the challenge to them and questions their understanding of who the Messiah really is and quotes from Ps. 110. While not denying that the title Son of David is his, See Bartimaeus. He shows up a paradox in the scriptures. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, David says that 'the Lord said to my Lord,' so how can his Lord be his son? While Ps. 110 was originally used as an enthronement hymn for the new king of Israel, there had been no Monarchy for a very long time, and eventually the Psalm had become a prophesy of the enthronement in heaven of the coming messiah king. Culturally there is no way that a descendant could be greater than the ancestor or patriarch of a people. Jesus has already said that he is greater than Solomon, Abraham and Jacob and now hints that he is greater than David. The implication now is that the Messiah is more than just an earthly King, that he is to be Lord, Adoni in the same sense that Yahweh is Adoni.

This short passage has many implications not least in Jesus saying that all scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Some scholars have questioned the authorship of the Psalms and whether some were written long before or after David. For the Jews this was not an important question as the scriptures invite everyone to share with David in the praise of God as God's people. This passage points to the mystery of the incarnation of the Messiah as one born of the people of Israel. For the early church this points to the resurrection and the victory over death and the evil of Satan and Jesus at the right hand of God the Father.

Jesus denounces the Scribes. Mk. 12:38-40, Isa. 10:1-2, Cat. 678-679

Jesus continues and now takes aim at the scribes. They are the lawyers theologians, who had been some of the most vocal opponents of Jesus. In spite of just having praised one of them as being not far from the kingdom of God, he condemns them for their conduct and looking for honour. They expected to be treated with deference and respect as being the authority of religion. Since they were forbidden to be paid for their service in teaching religion, they exploited people by expecting donations to keep them in favour, or by charging fees for legal services or by sponging on the generosity of widows and the poor. Deut. 24:17, Isa.1:17. The reciting of lengthy prayers were not the problem but that they were said as show and aimed at the people not God. Their reward is human praise and the denial of eternal life. Honour and respect is not a bad thing but when it becomes the object of ones life and an end in its self it leads to spiritual harm. Serving self rather than God.

The Widows Offering Mk.12:41-44 Ps. 68:6, Isa. 29:19, Zeph. 2:3, Cat 2443-2449, 1351

Having condemned false piety in the scribes, and how they devour the property of the widows, Jesus uses a living parable to show true piety in the devotion of the widow. He call the disciples to him, points out the lavish show of those putting lots of coins into the treasury chests, a noisy show of largess, and the contrast of the poor widow putting two small coins into the chest. And as with all parables the twist in the tail is that Jesus said she has put in more than all the rich did, meaning that she gave all that she had. God measures the value of our gifts to him by the motive of the heart.

Her donation to the temple meant that now she was totally dependant on the charity of God to provide for her. She is an example of the poor who are blessed by God who is their treasure. This is the last time Jesus speaks in the Temple.

Many scripture scholars have questions about this incident. Is Jesus showing what true devotion to God is? Is Jesus emphasising the corruption of the Temple officials for demanding donations, an entrance fee in order to pray in the Temple? Or is he pointing out the futility of giving funds to adorn the temple when in the next passage he predicts its destruction? Or who contributes most to the church today?

The End Times Mk. 13:1-37

the whole of Chapter 13 is about the end of the old order the end of days and the coming of the Son of man. It is probably the hardest chapter to understand. It is the longest discourse of Jesus in the Gospel and is sandwiched between two stories of women's generosity of great cost to themselves. Then comes the passion.

The Destruction of the temple is foretold. 13:1-8. 1Kgs. 9:6-8, Jer. 26:18, Dan. 9:26, Mic. 3:9-12, Cat. 583-586.

Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time, his disciples are awestruck by the grandeur of the site but having seen the corruption of the leadership, their hard heartedness, Jesus condemns the Temple and those who control it. The Disciples must have been shocked by this statement and ask Jesus to explain when and how this will happen. Ezek. 10:23 they are sitting on the mount of Olives where according to Zechariah 14:4 God's victory will come. When all things will come to an end, Accomplished, fulfilled. He tells them to watch-out, beware, be alert to the signs of the times. And to be on guard against being deceived by false news. The changes are the birth pangs of a new world. There is need for discernment when someone says follow me. Don't panic when there are earthquakes, wars and rumours of war and famine, this will only be the beginning.

Persecution to come Mk. 13:9-13. Mic.7:6-7

Jesus now warns the disciples that they too must be put to the test before the rulers and doing so must bear witness to the Gospel before all the nations. Be not afraid the Holy Spirit will guide you. You will be hated by all and even killed, even by one's family because of your faith in Christ. But persevere to the end and you will be saved.

The desolating Sacrilege and the coming of the Son of Man Mk.13:14-27. 1Macc. 1:54-50, Isa. 13:9-10, Dan.7:13-14, Joel 3

Jesus now predicts the end times the climax, the end of the old order, the temple and divine judgement. The desolating abomination, something or some-one standing where he should not ie the sanctuary, possibly a military figure or the anti-christ. The destruction carried out by people is allowed by God as a punishment for the sinful, to be refined and purified. The disciples must avoid being tempted to intervene with force but run and wait it out. This will affect both the wicked and the just alike. They must not be taken in by false messiahs when Jesus returns there will be no doubt.

Finally Jesus describes the cosmic events that will herald the arrival of the Son of Man.

The Fig Tree Mk. 13:28-31, Isa40:8, 51:6

The living parable of the fig tree is mentioned again, to learn from it to recognise that it symbolises the temple that was found wanting in producing fruit. Within a generation Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not.

Be on the watch Mk.13:32-37. Lam. 2;19, Ezek. 3:17, Hab. 2:1

While the coming events have been predicted by Jesus, he now says that no one knows the day or the hour. Like the doorkeeper, we must keep awake and ready for this event, or we may miss the moment when the master returns. We have clues but no timetable, so vigilance is needed. There is no room for complacency as a disciple of Jesus.

The Hour of Choices Mk.14:1-31

The Plot to Kill the Messiah. 14:1-2 Ps.31:13, 64:2, Jer. 20:10 Cat. 595-597.

Mark notes the time and day of the events since for the early Church this was very important. These were the most important days of the year for the Jews, the combination of the feasts of unleavened bread and the passover the holiest of feasts and central to the faith and history of Israel.

The plot to have Jesus killed is a replay of how the authorities tried to get rid of the prophet Jeremiah 18:18-20. Treachery and deceit are the evils that Jesus says comes from within and defile a person. They wanted to do away with him either before or after the feast so as not to incite a riot. But everything will happen according to the plan of God and tying them to the events of Passover.

The Anointing at Bethany Mk.14:3-9 1Sam. 10:1,16:13, Ps. 23:5, Songs, 1:12.

The sandwich of the generosity of the 2 women is completed. The meat in between we saw in chapter 13 and prophesy of the end times and coming of the Son of Man into his glory. The plot to kill Jesus is how it will take place. This beautiful little story is itself framed by the treachery of the Priests and Pharisees and the treachery of Judas. The woman in contrast is held for all time as the ideal disciple. Full of Love and gratitude and making sure that what she gives can never be taken back or used again, she shatters the alabaster jar. Nard, an ointment from India. The symbolic act of anointing the head is to anoint a king and ordain a priest. This is the only time in the gospel that Jesus is literally anointed, to be Messiah! She is rebuked, and scolded for her wasteful actions by those at the banquet. But they have missed the significance of what has just happened. And that devotion to the Messiah is always worth the cost. The Men are in turn rebuked by Jesus and the woman praised. She has done what she could, the same as the widow giving all that she could. She is extravagant and reckless, they are guarded and careful. She is the only person to understand the messianic purpose and meaning of the inevitable passion of Jesus.

Judas betrays. Mk 14:10-11, Ps. 55:13-15.

The marked contrast of the woman and the cold betrayal of Judas. He plots to Hand Jesus Over to the Priests. The phrase to Hand Over (paradidomi) is used many times in the events that follow. The priests hand him over to the pagans, the pagan ruler hands him over to be crucified. The whole world is complicit in rejecting Jesus.

Mark does not give any hint at the motive of Judas, was he angry that Jesus was not going to overthrow the authorities and become an earthly ruler and so force him to use his power? Was he upset at the symbol of the anointing? Was he afraid of being caught up in the consequences of the inevitable death of Jesus.? Mark writes that the priests offered him money not that he asked for it.

Preparations for the Passover Mk.14:12-16, Ex. 12:6, Lev.23:5.

Jesus had made arrangements beforehand probably to evade notice of the authorities. He is in control of events and the timing is important. This is the day that the lamb is sacrificed in the temple. The first day of unleavened bread. The evening meal must take place within the Holy city, and so the upper room on mount Zion is chosen. The disciples follow Jesus' instructions and find everything they need to make ready the passover meal.

Prediction of betrayal Mk. 14:17-21, Ps. 41:10-11, 55:13-15, Sir. 37:2.

The passover meal was more than just a ritual, it was for the family, a communion with each other and with the God who saves (from slavery). Table fellowship was always seen as a sacred moment between intimate relations, friends and made a bond between the participants. In this setting Jesus drops the terrible prediction that one of the companions will betray him. This must have stunned them. That one of the 12 the closest of disciples at table with them would betray Jesus to death, reflects Psalms 41 and 55 and Sirach. In each of these passages the victim is restored to life by God.

Each disciple searched his heart and asks not I surely. An examine of conscience before the institution of the Eucharist. Jesus again says it is one of you. Mark does not name Judas here, but Jesus warns them all of the terrible thing it is to betray the Son of Man. Is Jesus giving them all including Judas the chance to repent? This is an example of God given free will. God anticipates human free will choices, but does not cause them.

The Eucharist Mk. 14:22-25 Ex.12:13, Ex. 24:3-8, Isa. 53:11-12, Jer. 31:31-32.

Mark's Gospel has up to this moment prepared the reader for what Jesus is about to do. There were many meals shared with the disciples, Jesus had taught them, healed, overturned the established way of thinking, defeated demons and fed thousands in the wilderness and much more. He had said the he will give his life as a ransom and be raised from the dead. The disciples did not fully understand the teaching let alone who Jesus really is. Now he is changing the whole meaning of sacrifice and worship. The ritual meal of Passover, Seder, is always in a family setting. And the head explains the meaning of the symbolic food and actions this is changed by Jesus, the bread becomes his body and the wine his blood. This anticipates the passion to come. His death will be a gift to them and to all. By consuming this gift those who eat and drink absorb him and become absorbed by him.

There is no mention of a sacrificed lamb, Jesus takes the place of the Pascal Lamb. For the Jews Blood is the seat of life and sacred and was forbidden to consume, so for Jesus to say take and drink, must have been a shock to the system. Lev.17:14. So Blood was the means of atonement for sin. Nothing could be more precious than the blood of a living creature. How much more so the Blood of the Son of Man. So the blood of the covenant the bond between God and humanity at Sinai, the high point of the Exodus, is now changed to a new covenant bond and means an intimate communion, eating and drinking of the life of Christ, elevating one to share a divine life.

Prophecy of Denial Mk.14:26-31 Ps. 113-118

Back on the Mount of Olives, Jesus now predicts the failure of all of the disciples, they will all desert Jesus. Their faith will fall away. He quotes Zech. 13:7-9 but there is the note of being restored after testing and refining. He will go before, leading them after his resurrection, to Galilee. But Peter is still a stubborn self assured man who thinks he is stronger and knows better.

Gethsemane Mk.14:32- 42 Ps.55, 88, 116

Gethsemane, Hebrew for Oil press. For the 3rd time in the Gospel, Mark shows Jesus at prayer, these are significant times of discernment for him. He asks the 3 men closest to him to stay awake and watch with him. These men have seen the greatness and the glory and now see the fragility of a human in great distress. These men have all promised to suffer and die with him. Jesus is so much afraid and in such anguish that it is life threatening and looks to his friends for comfort, but they are asleep. He is alone with the father, and sees that everything is in the Father's control. Abba, the intimate form of address for one's Dad. Apart from the letters of St. Paul, only Mark dares to use this Aramaic word, is this an example of Mark witnessing this event and recording what Jesus says in prayer. Mark records that Jesus did not just resign in obedience to the father's will but is an act of total trust and love. The path he took at the temptation in the desert, in the type of Messiah the Father wants him to be, has led him to this moment. It is still his choice in his free will to accept or not. It is enough, the hour has come, the choice is made and the unfolding of event now set.

God has handed his Son over to sinners out of love for them, Judas hands him over to the rulers of Judah.

Betrayal and Arrest Mk.14:43-52.

Now there is a change in Jesus, up until this moment Jesus was in charge and acted, now events happen to him. He seems to have taken a passive role, but we the readers know that this is doing the will of the Father, and that plan is now becoming a reality. Judas leads the mob to Jesus and with a kiss hands him over. Jesus condemned the temple authorities as robbers, now they treat him as one. Jesus is arrested for carrying out his commission from God in the same way as the prophets of old were. He is abandoned by his close friends. This is the last time we see the disciples until the resurrection except for Peter's denials. The young man who runs away naked, is traditionally understood to be Mark.

The Trial. Mk.14:53-65 Ps.35:11-12, 110:1, Isa. 50:6 Isa. 53:7 Dan.7:13-14.

The Sanhedrin, (Greek for sitting together) is assembled at the High Priest's house at night very irregular, Peter follows discretely. He is contrasted with Jesus as he warms himself by the fire. The trial is rigged but even so the so called witnesses could not agree on their testimony. The Leaders have already decided that Jesus must die and try to make the trial look as legal as possible. The main accusation was that Jesus said that he would destroy the temple made by humans and in 3 days raise up another not made by human hands. What had Jesus really said. See Mk.13:2. 12:10-11. Nowhere had Jesus said he would destroy the temple. Beneath all this it is important that the Temple central, Jesus was seen as a threat to it and to the power of those in charge. His parables and especially the one of the vineyard was an implicit statement that he was God's beloved Son and that

the vineyard would be taken from the tenants. The High Priest tries to trap Jesus by his own words and asks for a clear answer are you the Messiah the son of the Blessed one? His answer was enough proof they needed. It is the only time Jesus says that he is. The great I Am. Now it is revealed and there is no longer any doubt as to what kind of Messiah he is, the one who lays down his life for the world. He continues with a quote from Daniel 7:9-14. referring to the coming judgement at the end of days. This was blasphemy. And no other charge was needed. Once condemned they abuse him shamefully. The suffering servant of Isaiah 50:6.

Peter Denies Jesus. Mk.14.66-72

Peter seemingly torn by the events trying to lay low but wanting to be near Jesus, is recognised as a disciple of the Nazarene. And denied knowing anything. And again recognised as a Galilean begins to curse and swear that he did not know this man. In a way, Peter is right he still does not know who Jesus is. He does the opposite of what a disciple is supposed to do deny himself to be with Jesus. But when the cock crows he comes to his senses and weeps. The humanity of Peter is important for us, the leader of the disciples is not seen as a hero but one who needs repentance and to be forgiven, and to be compassionate with those in his care.

The Crucifixion Mk.15:1-47**Jesus and Pilate Mk.15:1-5 Ps.2.2 Catechism 595-597**

Returning to the trial of Jesus, Mark shows the problem for the chief priest, they may condemn someone to death for blasphemy, but they cannot carry out the sentence of death while under Roman rule. So they consult with the elders and lawyers, have Jesus bound and at dawn, hand him over to Pilate. Pilate is amazed at the responses of Jesus to his questions and to the many charges the Priests make against him. The silence of Jesus like the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:7.

The charge of being the King of the Jews would be enough to convict Jesus as treason against Rome, but Pilate is shrewd enough to see that these charges are baseless and not the real reasons they want him dead.

Jesus Handed over to be crucified Mk. 15:6-15 , Gen. 37:11

He wants to find a way of shifting the responsibility onto the accusers and appeals to the crowd. This crowd may not be the same that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem earlier that week. Now Barabbas, (son of the father), a rebel against Rome captured during an insurrection was offered to the crowd to choose between him and Jesus for freedom. It is highly possible that the crowd were there in support of the rebels anyway and the priests would have easily incited them to choose Barabbas. In spite of Pilate seeing his innocence gives in to the the crowd and the Priests and hands Jesus over to be flogged and crucified. Mark does not give Pilate any credit for his actions, the Jews accused Jesus and handed him over to Pilate who had the power to release him as innocent, but his weakness in the face of the crowd, brands him as the one who condemned Jesus to death.

The King is Mocked Mk. 15:16-21 Isa. 50:6-7, 53:3-5.

It is now the turn of the Roman soldiers to Mock Jesus. After being flogged, and still naked they call out the whole cohort to abuse and make fun of him, beat him and call him king of the Jews. Probably just as much to annoy the Jews as to have fun with the mockery. Having enough of that they dressed and led him out to be crucified. On the way they force Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Jesus as he was too weak.

The Crucifixion Mk. 15:22-32 Deut. 21:23. Ps.22. Isa. 53:12.

Golgotha, the place of the skull. Jesus is offered drugged wine but refuses it. He is to endure the pain and humiliation fully without help. Mark does not describe what they do to Jesus only the stark phrase, 'they crucified him'. The soldiers take his clothes, cast lots for them and leave him hanging for people to see and continue to mock and shout at him. The title King of the Jews is written as the charge against him. Pilate may have written this as a kick at the Jewish leaders dishonesty, but also as a warning against other pretenders aspiring to be king without Roman authority. But for Christians this is the title that says it all, Jesus is the King who has defeated the Devil and sin by suffering in place of us. His victory over sin is through the great act of self sacrificing love.

It was customary for the executioners to claim the property/clothes of the condemned. Ps.22- This took place at 9 in the morning, these events happen at 3 hour intervals. Mark is showing that all this is carefully planned by God. Jesus endures this punishment reserved for the worst of criminals so

that we do not have to according to God's will. The suffering continues by the 3 fold tormenting of the crowds. Those passing by shake their heads and deride him, save yourself! The priests and scribes say let the Messiah, the King of Israel come down from the cross so we may believe. Those crucified with him also taunt him. But it just because he refused to save himself that we are saved. Through his obedience to the will of God will he be raised to life. Through his surrender of his body and blood is the covenant between God and humanity renewed. These taunts are the last temptation of Satan that began in the desert. There is an irony in what the Chief Priests call Jesus King of Israel. Up until this moment it was king of the Jews meaning the tribe of Judah, Israel now means all of the tribes, all of the people.

The Death of Jesus Mk.15:33-41 Amos 8:9-10, Ps.69:21

At noon and during the last 3 hours on the cross, there is darkness over the whole land. Not an eclipse, it is not possible for so long and it is the wrong time of year. In the Hebrew bible, supernatural darkness is a cosmic judgement and a sign of the day of the Lord. Exod. 10:21-23, Isa. 13:10-11, Joel 2:10-11-3:4.

The 9th hour = 3pm. The time of sacrifice of the pascal lamb. It seems to be the low point of the passion of Jesus and he cries out Eloi, Eloi, Lema sabachthani, the first lines of Psalm 22 in Aramaic. This is the only thing Mark records Jesus saying on the cross. And at first sight seem to be utter despair. The beloved son saying God has abandoned him. This is the climax of the total emptying of self, total isolation from all of his companions, from God and life. The end of the psalm is a note of confidence in the victory of god, but this does not diminish the agony of facing death alone.

The bystanders still do not understand Jesus and think he is calling for help. And say wait to see if he will be rescued. The offer of the vinegar, was it to prolong his suffering, or to offer sympathy? Ps.69.22. It is by remaining on the cross that he reveals that he is truly the Messiah and the King of Israel.

As he breathed his last with a loud cry, the sanctuary curtain is torn. The symbolic barrier between God and humanity is destroyed. The centurion witnesses the death and makes a profession of faith.

Death on a cross means suffocation, not able to breath. What the centurion saw made an impression and realised that this death is different. The beginning of Mark's gospel we read that the heavens were rent, torn apart the same word as used for the sanctuary veil. At the baptism, god calls Jesus his beloved son. Here at the baptism of blood on the cross Jesus is proclaimed son of God by a pagan. The first fruit of the sacrifice and the gathering of the gentiles to faith. Mark makes the revelation of Jesus as the son of God central to his gospel, the demons know but are muzzled and not allowed to speak about it. The gentiles who are healed have clues. The disciples and Jews are not able to get their heads round the idea. And it is only when Jesus is stripped naked and on the cross seemingly defeated and abandoned even by God, that his true identity as God's son is revealed to a gentile.

Here for the first time the women disciples are mentioned, some by name, but they too are standing at a distance, while the men are not present. These women are shown as true disciples as they

followed him and ministered to his needs. There is also here for the first time a hint that there were as many women as men in his entourage.

The Burial of Jesus Mk.15:42-47 Deut. 21:22-23, Isa. 53:9.

Mark makes a couple of very important points, that Jesus was truly dead, and that he was given a reverential burial albeit hurried.

Joseph of Arimethea. A member of the council, in accordance with the Mosaic law asks for the body to be buried. Was Joseph a hidden disciple, or just a devout Jew wanting to do what was right? Pilate is amazed that Jesus is dead already after only 6 hours, and asks for verification. The corpse is handed over to Joseph. Jesus refused to come down from the cross by his own power, he is taken down only in the passivity of death. The body wrapped in linen cloth,(expensive), is laid in a rock tomb and sealed in. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where Joseph laid him.

The Empty Tomb / Resurrection Mk.16:1-20

Mark has been preparing his readers of the Gospel, for the final glory and victory of Jesus. His victory over death.

Through the death of Jesus, God has liberated humanity from sin and restored communion with him. The account of the Resurrection is very brief but to the point. Mark invites his readers to enter into the story and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us and lead us to faith.

Mk 16:1-8 Job. 19:25, Ps.16:10-11 /86:13, Hos. 6:2, Jonah 2:7, Cat. 638-658-992-1004

There is silence from Mark about the following day, Holy Saturday, but when the Sabbath is over, meaning Saturday evening after sunset, the women buy the things needed to care for the body of Jesus, but wait until dawn to go to the tomb. A very clear contrast between the faith and compassion of the women and the men disciples who are not present. Mark mentions that the Sun has Risen, perhaps a sign that the darkness of evil is now over. Malachi 3:20 *'the Sun of justice shall rise with its healing rays...* ' It is also the first day of the week, like a new genesis and a new creation. But the women have forgotten about the prophesies of the resurrection and are only concerned with doing what is right for the corps of Jesus. They are incapable of moving the stone covering of the tomb, a symbol of the human frailty and inability to deal with the reality of death. They look up to see that the stone is rolled away. Looking up is a biblical device to show God is a work and has entered the story again. The young man in white, they are amazed. The heavenly vision reassures them saying there is no need to be amazed, he who was crucified, he is risen. Jesus who did not escape or avoid death, but destroyed it from within and his prophesies are true. They see the empty tomb. Not proof in itself but a sign. They are to tell the disciples and Peter. Women are given the commission to be witnesses to the resurrection, something that was unthinkable for women to be. Apostles to the apostles. They are to meet Jesus in Galilee, the starting point and where the Gospel was first preached. But suddenly this all goes wrong. They ran away scared out of their wits and say nothing to anyone. The messianic secret which was not kept by those healed and didn't keep silent, now is to be proclaimed and they keep silence...

the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of Mark end here.

Was the end really here?, did Mark die before he could finish it? Was the ending lost? These are some of the many questions about it.

But Mark throughout all of his story has shown the stubborn and closed mindedness of the disciples. Their inability to understand what Jesus was saying. And the faithless running away of his closest companions. The complete honesty of his reporting of the events and the character of the disciples. Like them the readers of Mark are confronted with the person of Jesus, his amazing actions and prophesies, his death and we are challenged to believe and respond in faith. In a way the story has not ended at all it continues in us and everyone who becomes a disciple.

Jesus appears to Mary of Magdala Mk.16:9-11

The final verses we have today were as most scholars agree, written late 1st century or very early 2nd by a Christian trying to fill out the story as by then accepted. The Holy Spirit's inspiration is not

limited to the original author but includes the editors of the final form. Whoever wrote this ending was familiar with the tradition of the other gospels. Significantly here it is Jesus who takes the initiative of appearing to a woman, Mary the one 7 demons were driven out of. She is sent to tell the disciples but they do not believe her. They are still weeping and mourning unable to believe that God could defeat death.

Jesus appears to two disciples. Mk.16:12-13.

These verses seem to be drawn from Luke 24:13-35. when these return to tell the others they are not believed either.

The Apostles are commissioned Mk.16:14-18 Isa. 40:9, 52:7, 66:19, Nah. 2;1.

At last Jesus appears to the 11 and he reproaches them for their hardness of heart and refusal to believe those who had seen him. He then tells them to proclaim the gospel to all creation. The sign of a Christian the acceptance of the witness of the apostles that Jesus is alive and that they have seen him. The good news is now for all creation and not limited to the people of Israel but there is a warning for those who do not believe, they will be condemned. Anyone who hears the gospel and refuses to believe forfeits God's gift of salvation.

With the commission there are signs and gifts to show their belonging to Christ. In that they will do what he did and heal those in need. The order to proclaim must be accompanied with action and demonstration of God's power.

The Ascension Mk. 16:19-20, Ps.110.

The conclusion of this ending refers to Jesus as the Lord Jesus, who is taken up into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God. Fully revealing his divinity. And now is present to all in a new reality inspiring and working with the disciples to go to the ends of the earth preaching the word and confirming it by the signs. Not only to the ends of the earth and all creation but to the end of time.