Mark

1:1. "the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is sometimes asked why there are four Gospels? Part of the answer is likely that for any testimony to be validated, there needs to be 2 or 3 witnesses (Deut. 17:6, 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28), and the four Gospels provide that, especially since Matthew and John were eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, the accounts by Mark and Luke have been recognized by most Christians not only as authentic historical documents, but also as God-inspired records of the life of Christ.

The second reason there are Four Gospels is that each is written from a different perspective, and together they comprise a very profound, prophetic and precise fourfold pattern of the Messiah. We will see that the pattern in the four Gospels is that Matthew portrays Christ as a king, Mark as a servant, Luke as a man, and John as the Son of God. This pattern had already been set forth and foreshadowed long before by the Old Testament prophets. This fourfold pattern has its roots in an important Hebrew term used in the prophecies of Christ, which is *tsemach*. *Tsemach* means "sprout" or "offspring," and is often translated "Branch." *Tsemach* paints a mental picture of a new sprout or shoot coming up out of a dead-looking stump, certainly an appropriate picture of the Messiah, because just when it looked like Israel was cut down and dead, out of it sprang the Messiah. In the Old Testament, *tsemach* is used five times in direct prophetic reference to the Messiah and aspects of his life. Although "the branch" was a common term for the Messiah, five Old Testament verses in particular lay out a fourfold prophetic picture of him. In two verses the Branch is shown to be a king (Jer. 23:5; 33:15), then the Branch is shown as a servant (Zech. 6:12), then the Branch is shown to be a man (Zech. 6:12), and also, the Branch is shown to be "the Branch of the LORD (Yahweh)" i.e., one directly from LORD God (Isa. 4:2).

These four descriptions of the Messiah subdivide according to one of the most basic distinctions we can make about any person: who he *is* and what he *does*. Two of the four terms refer to his **person**—*Son* and *man*, while the other two relate to his **work**—*King* and *servant*. Intrinsic to these terms is another important distinction in the life of the Messiah: he is humbled and he is exalted, that is, both "sufferings" and "glory" will characterize his life. We see Jesus' humility in the designations man and servant, we see his exaltation in the terms king and Son of God. Although the four Gospels are in many ways the same, they are also unique, with both their own vocabulary and style.

Matthew has a number of unique characteristics that point to Christ as King. Matthew's genealogy presents Jesus as a King from the line of David, and starts out with the "record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David," and then gives the genealogy from Abraham, the one who was promised the land, through King David, who was promised the kingdom in a covenant of salt with God (2 Chron. 13:5). Matthew mentions the humble birth of Christ in one sentence (1:25), but then skips forward almost two years until the Magi arrive and ask "...Where is the one who has been born king...?" (Matt. 2:2). Then the Magi present the royal Son with gifts appropriate of his status as king. The phrase, "the kingdom of heaven" is associated with the specific reign of the Messiah on earth. It occurs more than 30 times in the gospel of Matthew, but not once in any of the other Gospels, which use the phrase, "kingdom of God." The title, "Son of David," occurs ten times in Matthew and only six times in all the other Gospels combined. There are a number of parables that are unique to Matthew, and most of them

have a clear reference to the Kingdom. These include: the Tares (13:24-30); the Hidden Treasure (13:44); the Pearl (13:45); the Dragnet (13:47); the Unmerciful Servant (18:23-35); the Laborers in the Vineyard (20:1-16); the Two Sons (21:28-32); the Marriage of the Kings Son (22:1-14); and the Ten Virgins (25:1-13). Only Matthew records the "sheep and goat judgment," when the king lets the righteous into his kingdom but excludes the unrighteous (Matt. 25).

The Gospel of Mark, which presents Christ as a servant, is short, simple and forceful, emphasizing Christ's works more than his words. Unlike Matthew, Luke and John, Mark has no genealogy at all, which makes sense because a servant's genealogy is not relevant—the work he does is what matters. Commentators have long noticed that Mark focuses more on what Jesus *did* than what he *said*, which makes sense because obedient action is the sign of a good servant. Mark also moves quickly from one event to another. Even the vocabulary reflects this pattern. The Greek word *eutheos* ("immediately") occurs 40 times in Mark but only 27 times in all the other Gospels combined. That statistic is made even more vivid when one realizes that there are only 16 chapters in Mark, but 73 chapters in the other three Gospels. A valued servant is quick to obey. E. W. Bullinger, who also saw the fourfold portrait of Christ, notes that Jesus "is addressed as 'Lord' in the other three Gospels 73 times,...he is addressed as such as such in the Gospel of Mark only twice" (*Companion Bible*; intro to Mark). Bullinger notes that of these two uses of "Lord" that appear in the KJV, one was by a Gentile woman and was simply the title equivalent of "sir" (7:28), and one is 9:24, which is not even in the earliest Greek texts, but was a later addition. So actually, Jesus is never called "Lord" in Mark by anyone who knew he was the Messiah, a clear indication of the emphasis in Mark on Jesus' role as God's servant. Appropriately, more than a third of Mark takes place in the last week of Jesus' life placing special emphasis on his obedience and personal sacrifice.

The Gospel of Luke, which portrays Christ as a man, presents the Messiah and his relationships in a way that highlights his humanity as the Last Adam. The gospel of Luke has a genealogy that traces Jesus back to Adam, the first man. Luke opens with information on the parents and birth of John the Baptist, giving information we would expect to find in a "human interest" story. It then gives details about Joseph and Mary and the circumstances of Jesus' birth, including his being presented at the Temple. These details show that Jesus was born in normal human circumstances (see commentary), and subject to the same laws and regulations as every other Jewish child.

Luke has an emphasis on both prayer and praise to God, which is appropriate for all mankind. Jesus is shown praying in 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 11:1; 22:32, 41, 44; and 23:34. Luke has four great praise hymns that are unique to Luke: the Magnificat of Mary (1:46-55); the Benedictus of Zacharias (1:68-79); the Gloria in Excelsis of the angels (2:14), and the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon (2:29-32), and praise to God is mentioned in many other verses.

Luke clearly portrays Jesus' great love for all mankind, and describes him as a warm and loving person. Commentators note that the book of Luke portrays Jesus' special concern for the poor, sinners, women and the family more clearly than any other Gospel. Luke has a unique emphasis on women, and speaks of women in a way not covered in the other Gospels, for example, Elizabeth, Anna, the widow of Nain, the repentant woman (7:37-50); the women who ministered to Christ (8:2, 3), the daughters

of Jerusalem (23:27, 28), and Mary and Martha (10:38-42). Also, Luke shows Jesus sympathetically acknowledging the Gentiles. The parables that are unique to Luke emphasize human traits such as love for fellow man (and the importance of an individual), wisdom, and foolishness. Parables unique to Luke include: the Two Debtors (7:41, 42); the Good Samaritan (10:30-37); the Persistent Friend (11:5-8); the Rich Fool (12:16-21); the Lost Coin (15:8-10); the Forgiving Father (15:11-32); the Wise Manager (16:1-12); the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31); the Persistent Widow (18:1-8); the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14).

The Gospel of John, which portrays Christ as the Son of God, starts out by saying that God, in the beginning, had a plan, purpose or wisdom (the *logos*) that became flesh, that is, the Son "comes from" the Father. This is a very short genealogy: the Father had a Son, an *only begotten* Son, and since Jesus' father is God, any portrayal of his earthly birth would only take emphasis away from the true Father. Jesus' intimacy with his Father is uniquely portrayed in John. For example, the word "father" occurs as many times in John as in all the other Gospels combined.

The narrator writes the Gospel of John from the standpoint that Jesus is already exalted and in heaven, something both unique to John and appropriate to his status as the Son of God (cp. John 3:13 and commentary). Theologians have long noticed that John is different from the other Gospels and truly unique. This fits with our expectations, because, as "the only begotten Son of God," Jesus is truly unique.

John is also unique from the standpoint of what it leaves out. For example, there is no temptation in the wilderness. Kings, servants, and humans need to demonstrate their qualifications and be proven for the job they do, but as the Son of God, Jesus is qualified to be the Messiah without being tempted first. Similarly, there is no transfiguration, because, as we have already said, John sees Jesus from the perspective of already being risen and in glory, not the perspective of preparing for his glory.

It should catch our attention that when the Messiah does a miracle in his role as King, Servant, or Man, the act is called a "miracle" (*dunamis*). The Greek word *dunamis* (miracle; power) occurs almost 40 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but it does not occur at all in John. In contrast to the other Gospels, when Jesus does a miracle in the Gospel of John, the work is called a "sign" (*simeion*). A "sign" is something that gives information and points to something else. For example, a road sign with a curved line on it points out that there is a curve in the road ahead. The eight "signs" in John that are clearly miracles are called "signs" because they point to Jesus as the Son of God. Thus, Jesus could say, "though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is united with me, and I am united with the Father" (John 10:38); and "Keep on believing me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else keep believing me because of the works themselves" (14:11). The eight miracle signs in John are:

1. Water to Wine (2:1-11; called a sign in v. 11)
2. The Ruler's Son Healed (4:46-50; called a sign in 48, 54)
3. Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-47; not specifically called a sign, but in 6:2 Jesus' healing the sick was called a sign)
4. Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14; called a sign in 14)
5. Walking on the Sea (6:17-21; not specifically called a sign, but obviously included in the plural "signs" in 6:26)

6. Man Born Blind (9:1-39; called a sign in 16)
7. Lazarus Raised From the Dead (11:1-45; called a sign by the Jews in 47, and called a sign in 12:18)
8. Multitude of Fish (21:1-11; Although the word "sign" is not used in John 21, the sign of the fish occurs immediately after John 20:30 and 31, which speak of "these" signs that are written, and thus certainly includes the sign that follows immediately afterward)

Besides these specifically mentioned signs, there are other places in John that refer to signs Jesus was doing, such as 2:23; 3:2; 7:31; and 12:37. The signs that Jesus was doing shows the prejudice and spiritual blindness of the Jews, who a number of times asked Jesus to show them a sign of who he was (John 2:18; 6:30).

The fourfold portrait of Christ given by the Four Gospels is good evidence they are the God-breathed Word of God, and not just the writing and memories of four men. There is no way the four different writers could have collaborated on their individual Gospels and produced this remarkable fourfold portrait of Christ. Like all the different writers of the Bible, they each wrote independently of one another, separated by both time and space. They could not have agreed upon what to include together and what to emphasize individually such that the wonderful fourfold portrait of Christ that was foretold in the Old Testament was laid out in the Four Gospels.

1:2. "As it is written in Isaiah." The quotation is from both Malachi 3:1 and the book of Isaiah. This is not "a mistake" or "error," as some people claim, as if Mark thought the whole quotation was from Isaiah. Verses 2 and 3 are run together as if they were one quotation, not two. By just mentioning the part quoted from Isaiah, Mark is using a literary device that puts the emphasis of the extended quotation on the part that Isaiah wrote, which says what we are to do in light of the Lord's coming. Hendrickson writes: "Mark tells us that he is going to quote from Isaiah. He does exactly that, though not immediately." Had Mark quoted only Isaiah, we would be left knowing only that a "voice" was crying in the wilderness. By quoting Malachi before Malachi, we know to whom the "voice" belongs: to none other than the messenger who will begin to prepare the way of the Lord.

The quotation from Malachi has been adapted to fit the Messiah. A more literal quotation of the Hebrew of Malachi 3:1 would be, "Behold, I [Yahweh] am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way [road] before me." In Mark, the verse has been modified so that the messenger prepares the road for the Messiah. Hence here in Mark the verse means, "Look!, I am sending my [Yahweh's] messenger before your [the Messiah's] face, who will prepare your [the Messiah's] way.

This is not the only place two places in the OT are quoted but only one prophet is cited. For example, Matthew 27:9 and 10 come from Zechariah and Jeremiah, but only Jeremiah is quoted. This same pattern occurs in the OT in 2 Chronicles 36:21, which says it quotes Jeremiah, but actually quotes both Jeremiah and Leviticus. When God quotes two sources, but only gives credit to one, He is telling us where to place the emphasis in what he is quoting so there is no guesswork about it.

In light of the fact that the extended quotation comes from Malachi and then Isaiah, it is easy to see why copyists would change "Isaiah the prophet" to "in the prophets." The earliest texts from both the Alexandrian and Western text families have

Isaiah the prophet, and the change to "the prophets" is "an obvious correction" (Roger Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*).

"Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).

"prepare the road." See commentary on verse 3.

1:3. This verse is quoted from Isaiah 40:3.

"Make the road ready for the Lord! Make his paths straight!" The word "road" is *hodos* (#3598 ὁδός). Like our English word "way," it can refer to a road or path, or it can refer to a specific way of doing things. Many times, such as here, its primary meaning is "road," and it is helpful to translate it that way.

In the Old Testament times (this verse is quoted from Isaiah, roughly 750 BC), there was not much attention paid to the condition of the roads in a country. Even in Roman times, usually only the very important central roadways, and the roads in cities, got any real attention. Nobody owned the roads, and nobody profited from spending time repairing them. It was just repeated use that made the terrain into dirt paths, some wider than others, that then were referred to as roads. Books on the customs of the Bible lands (especially those from the 1800's or earlier), are replete with stories of the horrors of traveling on roads. They were full of pits, or rocky, or had overhanging foliage that could knock a rider off a mount. They were dark at night and slippery when wet or frozen. They often ascended or descended quickly, and became very dangerous if the conditions were less than ideal. Often thorn bushes grew near the road such that unwary travelers were scratched or had their clothing torn. Added to all this was that there were no road signs to tell travelers where they were, or what road to take if they came to a crossroads. This caused a lot of anxiety to travelers, who did not want to waste time going the wrong way, and could be quite dangerous if the road went to an area that was inhabited by robbers. When Jesus said, "I am the road," (usually translated, "I am the way"), he was being clear that if a person did not want to get lost trying to get to God, that Jesus was the road to travel on.

When a king (or sometimes a high official) was going to go on a journey, he would send out messengers before he traveled. They would announce to the farmers and villagers who lived close to the road to take the time to go out and prepare it to make the kings trip easier. The villagers would clear the rock and bushes, fill in ruts and pits, and generally make the road safer and easier to travel. "Make his paths straight" does not refer to taking winding sections of the road and re-routing them, although that might have been done on a small scale if the road whet around something that was no longer an obstacle. The word "straight" can also mean "level," and in this context refers to filling up the pits and holes that developed in the road so it was level and easy to ride on.

1:4. There is a textual variation in this verse concerning whether or not *John came baptizing* or *John the Baptizer came*. Some versions read, "John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness" (ESV); while others read, "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness," (NRSV). The difference depends on the addition or deletion of the single letter for the article *ho*, (#3588 ὁ), meaning "the." It is most likely, however, that the *ho* is not original and the preferred reading is "John came baptizing." The reason for this is that John is frequently elsewhere called John the *Baptist*, but never John the *Baptizer*. This leads credence to viewing the participle "Baptizing" as descriptive of John's action and not a title (Cp. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*).

"a baptism that symbolized repentance." The Greek word translated "repentance" is, *metanoia* (#3341 μετάνοια), and it means to change one's mind, and therefore life and lifestyle. It is ceasing thinking and doing things that are contrary to God, and instead thinking and behaving in a way that is in obedience to God.

"Repentance" is in the genitive case, so literal translation is: "baptism of repentance." Daniel Wallace points out that the genitive is so ambiguous that it can have many meanings, and therefore he says, "it may well be best to be non-committal: 'baptism that is somehow related to repentance" (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 80). While Wallace's statement is accurate, it is unsatisfying. It leaves us with the same problem we started with, which is that we do not know the meaning of the phrase. We should be able to draw a conclusion about the meaning of the genitive from the scope of Scripture. Of course, the denominations vary greatly about their interpretation of the scope of Scripture, and the scholars do also. On one extreme, for example, is saying the genitive is one of production, so the meaning would be "a baptism that produces repentance." We assert that the baptism did not produce the repentance, or "complete" it in any way, beyond cementing in the mind of the person who had been baptized that since he had made a public declaration before God and people, he better honor his vow and life a godly lifestyle.

In his list of possible interpretations, Wallace himself gives what may be the best way to understand and translate this verse and the concept behind it: "baptism that symbolized repentance." In the same way that animal sacrifice was a symbol that pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, water baptism and washing rituals were part of the Old Testament and pointed to and symbolized the coming of the greater baptism, which was baptism in holy spirit. Many Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the spirit, which they universally said would be poured out from heaven (Isa. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29; Zech. 12:10). Then, John the Baptist was the first person we know of to refer to that pouring out as "baptism," and then Jesus also referred to the pouring out of the holy spirit upon people as a "baptism" in the holy spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5).

A number of translators and scholars have seen that the genitive in this sentence is a genitive of relation, and the relation that best is being expressed is that when a person repents before God, he demonstrates that repentance by a public ceremony of baptism. Thus the outward act of water baptism symbolized the inner act of going from the old to the new, or from death to life, in the heart. C. S. Mann writes: "An alternative rendering of this Semitism would be, 'A baptism which symbolized repentance" (*The Anchor Bible: Mark*). F. Grant writes: "This baptism was the symbol of repentance" (The Interpreter's Bible). Walter Wessel writes: the baptism indicated the repentance had already occurred of was being accompanied by it" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*; F. Gaebelein general editor). Ann Nyland translates the last part of Mark 1:4 as: He [John] preached that people should be baptized as a symbol that they had changed their minds, and this resulted in their sins being cancelled" (*The Source NT*). Charles Williams translates: "a baptism conditioned on repentance" (*The NT in the Language of the People*). *The New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips translates the last part of the verse: John came... "proclaiming baptism as the mark of a complete change of heart and of the forgiveness of sins."

"repentance resulting in the remission of sins." The Greek word *eis*, here translated as "resulting in," has many meanings, primarily purpose or result. The

translation in most versions, "for" is somewhat ambiguous although accurate. A major theme in the Bible is that if a person will repent he will be forgiven. Over and over God tells people that if they will humble themselves and come to Him for forgiveness, he will indeed forgive them (1 John 1:9 is very clear, but also see such verses as: Neh. 9:7; Ps. 32:5; 103:11-13; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 5:1; 36:3; Luke 6:37). There is no place where God says something such as: "If you confess your sin I will consider forgiving you."

The *eis* can be translated "because," a less frequent but very valid meaning of *eis* (cp. Wuest, *Word Studies*). In that case, people were baptized as a symbol because their sins had been forgiven. However, that is actually just another way of understanding the *eis* as a result clause—it would be saying the people were baptized because their repentance led to remission. That concept can be worded as a result clause, as we have in the REV: "baptism that symbolized repentance resulting in the remission of sins." In other words, the people were baptized as a symbol that they had repented, a repentance which had, as always, resulted in the remission of their sin.

The people came to John to be baptized so they could enter the Kingdom of God. As they stood by John they confessed their sins and repented. That confession and repentance resulted in their sins being forgiven (remitted), and John baptized them as a symbol of that repentance and forgiveness. Ann Nyland translates the phrase: "baptized as a symbol that they had changed their minds, and this resulted in their sins being cancelled" (*The Source NT*).

1:5. "the whole country of Judea, and all Jerusalem." A good example of oriental hyperbole (exaggeration). Not everyone went to John to be baptized, but a great many did.

1:8. "in holy spirit." There is no definite article. This holy spirit is the gift of God. (cp. Matt 3:10).

1:10. "immediately as he was stepping up." The words in many versions, "coming up out of the water," do not make it clear that the Greek text of Matthew and Mark do not refer to Jesus breaking the surface of the water of the Jordan, but rather to him walking out of the water, up the bank, and away from the river after the baptism was completed. The Greek text of Mark reads, *anabainōn ek tou hudatos* (ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος), "coming up out of the water," where the word "ek" means "out of," in the sense that he was getting "out of" the water, not standing in it. The water was below the level of the bank, as it is in all rivers, so in order to get out of the water, Jesus had to "come up" out of the Jordan. We need to become clear about the fact that someone standing waist deep in water is not "out of" the water, but very much in it. However, the text says that Jesus was coming "out of" the water.

The Gospel of Matthew makes the action of Jesus crystal clear, especially when combined with Mark. Matthew 3:16 reads, *anebē apo tou hudatos* (ἀνέβη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος), "he came up away from the water." This is the same basic vocabulary as Mark but inflected differently, except Matthew uses the preposition *apo*, "away from," not *ek*, "out of." Thus while Mark says Jesus was coming "out of" the water, Matthew emphasized that he was moving "away from" it, walking up the bank and away from the Jordan River.

The Greek word *anabainō* (#305 ἀναβαίνω) means "to go up," "to come up," and so saying, like many English versions, that Jesus "was coming up" out of the water is a very literal translation, and the REV could have used the translation "coming up from" in

Mark, and "coming away from," in Matthew. However, these translations are too often misinterpreted to mean that Jesus was still in the Jordan River with John when the heavens opened, so given the context, saying he "was stepping up" out of the water is a very acceptable translation, especially in light of the fact that it exactly describes what he was doing. It is also the translation preferred by Hendrickson (*New Testament Commentary*). The noted commentator R. C. H. Lenski writes:

> "The descent of the Spirit occurred after the baptism had been completed, while Jesus was walking up onto the bank of the river. We should not picture it as the artists do, as though it occurred while Jesus was being baptized or while he was standing knee-deep in the water. Matthew 3:16 has *apo*, Jesus went away from the water; Mark has *ek*...Jesus stepped out of (*ek*) the water onto the bank and walked away from (*apo*) the water up the bank" (*The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel*).

But why is it important to know that John's baptism was finished and Jesus was walking away on the bank of the river? After being baptized by John, Jesus was truly ready to start his own ministry as the Messiah apart from the ministry of John or anyone else. By making it clear that the baptism of John was over and Jesus had left John, we can clearly see that the heavenly vision and voice were not connected with John, but were specifically and individually to Jesus (cp. notes on Matt. 3:16 by W. Davies, and D. Allison, *The International Critical Commentary*). It is appropriate that God would put holy spirit upon Jesus just as he started off to do his own ministry, and not as he was standing in the water with John, as if the two ministries were somehow related. The work of the Messiah could only have been done by the one man, the true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Another time people stepped up and out of the Jordan is in Acts 8:38 and 39, when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts makes the getting into and out of the water of the Jordan River a little more clear because it speaks of them both getting in the water and coming back up from it. We can mentally picture them as they "went down into the water," getting out of the chariot, walking down the bank into the water, and then Philip baptizing the eunuch. Then Acts 8:39 says they "came up out of the water" ("stepped up out of the water;" REV) coming up the bank and back toward the chariot, at which point Philip was miraculously transported away from there to Azotus (the Ashdod of the OT). (For more, see note on Matt. 3:16; Acts 8:39).

1:13. "were ministering." The Greek verb is *diakoneō (*#1247 διακονέω), and it is in the imperfect tense, thus indicating an action in the past which occurred over a period of time. Although a number of commentators state that they believe that Satan had already left Jesus' presence when the angels came, that does not seem to be the sense of the Greek text or a simple reading of the verse itself. The flow of the verse clearly seems to indicate that the angels were with him at times while he was in the desert, just as the wild animals were. If we read the verse as it stands, the wild animals were certainly with Jesus during his time in the desert, and the verse simply continues on and says that the angels were ministering to him, as if they also were there at times during his temptation in the desert. Jesus' desert experience would have been like life: the hardships of life (the desert), the presence of physical enemies (the wild animals), the hoards of Satan (including Satan himself), and God's angels, all around one man who needed to resist temptation and walk in wisdom and power. There is no reason to believe that the presence of angels somehow meant that Jesus was not really tempted. For one thing, it is

unlikely that the angels were there all the time, any more than he was constantly surrounded by wild animals. They would likely come and go. Also, the angels did not keep Jesus from being tempted, but their presence helped remind Jesus how much was at stake in his living a sinless life.

The Word specifically says that it was the Spirit, God, who led Jesus into the desert (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1). The Gospel of Mark is even more forceful, saying that the Spirit "drove" Jesus into the desert (Mark 1:12). But why? Why the need to be in the desert? It surely makes a parallel between Jesus in the desert and Moses and Israel in the desert. Jesus was 40 days in the desert fasting just as Moses was 40 days fasting on Mt. Sinai (Moses was there twice: Ex. 24:18; 34:28), and Israel was 40 years in the desert. There was an angel of the Lord in the desert who helped Israel in its wanderings (Ex. 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2) and so too Jesus had angelic support. It was Moses' and Israel's disobedience in the desert that led to the death of a generation of Israelites, the death of Israel's great leaders, and by dividing the Twelve Tribes to both sides of the Jordan River, put an end to the vision of a united Israel in the Promised Land. In contrast, Jesus' obedience in the wilderness, and his resisting physical, mental, and spiritual temptation, contributed to his being able to restore and give life to the nation of Israel once again.

1:14. "Good News of God." The words "of the kingdom" were added by copyists, to conform this verse with many others that appear in the Four Gospels. This is the only use of "Good News of God" in the Gospels, and from the context it is clear that it does indeed refer to the Good News of the Kingdom.

1:24. "What do we have in common with you." See note, Matt. 8:29.

1:25. "subdued." Verse 25 has a couple words that have technical meanings relating to Greek magical arts (which we understand is actually part of the spiritual battle), that we must pay attention to in order to understand the verse. In every language, there are words that have a technical meaning as well as having a standard or usual meaning. In this verse, the Greek word translated "subdued" is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω), which usually means to express strong disapproval of someone: rebuke, reprove, censure; or to speak seriously, and thus warn in order to prevent or end an action; or "punish" (cp. BDAG Lexicon).

That is not its meaning here, however. For one thing, the demon would not respond to being "rebuked." It does not care, or is too arrogant to know, it is doing evil. Jesus would have certainly followed the wisdom of Proverbs: "a mocker does not listen to rebuke" (Prov. 13:1. Cp. Prov. 9:7, 8; 15:5, 12; 17:10; 23:9; 29:9). In this context, *epitimaō* is used in the technical sense in which it is in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon.

The technical sense is not common in the Greek literature that has survived to this day, and so does not show up in many Greek lexicons (cp. Bullinger, BDAG, Thayer, and Vine). That fact helps explains why not many Bible teachers are aware of the technical use of the word that refers to subduing rival powers in the spiritual battle between good and evil. Robert Guelich (*Word Biblical Commentary: Mark*) translates the opening phrase of verse 25: "Jesus subdued him...." and notes that in contexts like these, *epitimaō* is "a commanding word uttered by God or by his spokesman, by which evil powers are brought into submission." (cp. A. Nylan, *The Source NT*). Greg Boyd writes: "...the term

denotes and authoritative exercise of God's power in subduing his enemies. It accomplishes what it speaks" (*God at War*; p. 207).

Epitimaō also occurs in the records of Jesus "rebuking" the storm on the Sea of Galilee, after which there was a great calm (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24). Jesus subdued the storm by superior spiritual power. Greg Boyd writes: "It thus appears that, in "muzzling" this storm, Jesus is muzzling yet another demon" (*God at War*; p. 206). It seems clear that the storm was caused by a demon. Many of Jesus' apostles who were with him on the boat when the storm came up were experience fishermen and would not have risked their lives if the weather looked threatening. The Devil was trying to take advantage of Jesus being in a supposedly vulnerable position and kill him or the apostles by drowning them.

In the spiritual battle there are some spirits that are more powerful than others. Strength and authority are real among spiritual beings, just as they are real on earth among creatures of the flesh. In Daniel 10:1-13 there is a spiritual battle in which an angel of God is prevented by a demon from answering Daniel's prayer until a stronger angel shows up and assists in the fight. Revelation 12:7-9 describe a war in heaven in which the Devil is the weaker one and loses the fight, resulting in his being thrown down to earth.

Describing the spiritual battle, or any spiritual reality for that matter, is difficult. Therefore the Bible uses vocabulary that describes the spiritual battle that the Greeks would be familiar with—sorcerer against sorcerer and god against god—so the people could understand that Jesus was subduing evil spirits by using greater spiritual power. Jesus wielded the power of the true God, and thus was able to subdued the demon by that power, expressed through words. Jesus did not gain control over the demon by virtue of some "magic words" or formula that he used, as if he was some sort of Greek sorcerer. "It is not a magical incantation...it is powerful Word of the Son" (Gerhard Kittle, *Theological Dictionary*, ἐπιτιμάω Vol. 2, p. 626). The power came from God and was used by Jesus, who then instructed the Twelve Apostles (Matt. 10:5-8), and the Seventy Two (Luke 10:1-17) in casting out demons in the spiritual battle. Every Christian has the inherent power through the gift of holy spirit to subdue and cast out demons.

"Be bound." As with the word "subdued" (Mark 1:25 above), the Greek word *phimoō* (#5392 φιμόω) has a technical meaning in this context that relates to the spiritual battle. Ordinarily *phimoō* means to close the mouth with a muzzle or to silence. For example, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain" (1 Cor. 9:9). However, it was used in Greek magic to denote the binding of a person with a spell. Moulton and Milligan write that it can refer to "the binding of a person by means of a spell, so as to make him powerless to harm" (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. Cp. Ann Nyland, *The Source NT*; footnote on Matt. 22:12 and her translation: "Be bound!").

While it is true that the translation, "Be quiet" or "Silence," which most versions have, is part of the meaning, the real force of the command, *phimoō*, is about binding the power of evil. Thus, the Greek conveys a spiritual power which binds evil that is much better expressed by the command "Be bound," than it is by the English, "Silence," which does not convey any of the spiritual binding of evil that is the real point of the command. Jesus did not just command the demon to be quiet--although that is included in what he did—he bound it with the power of his word. That he commanded the demons not to speak can be gained from the sense of the word, the context, and scope of Scripture, as

we see in verse 34. Another indication that Jesus' command was not an immediate demand for silence was that the demon came out with a shriek. If Jesus had in fact commanded by the power of God that there be "silence," the demon would not have even shrieked.

1:32. "they brought to him everyone." After the sun set the workday stopped, so people had a better opportunity to bring the sick and needy to Jesus.

1:41. "touched." The Greek verb is *haptō* (#681 ἅπτω), a word that has two distinct meanings. It properly means "*to fasten to, make adhere to*; hence, specifically to fasten fire to a thing, *to kindle, set on fire,* (often so in Attic Greek); cp. Luke 8:16; 11:33; 15:8. However, when it is used in the middle voice (*haptomai*; #680 ἅπτομαι) it means "to make close contact with," and has a very wide range of applications. It can mean, touch, take hold of, hold; cling to; to have contact with, or partake of something with cultic implications, (often used of touching as a means of conveying a blessing or "touching" or partaking of an unclean thing, including eating, almost like we would say, "you have not touched your food"); it can be used almost idiomatically for intimate touch, sexual contact (1 Cor. 7:1; we use "touch" the same way today); and it can be used for contact with someone with a view to causing harm, i.e., injure (Job 5:19 LXX, "no evil shall touch you.") (BDAG; Thayer).

In this verse, there is little doubt that Jesus did more than just make a light physical contact with the leper. He would have at the very least placed his hands on him as any priest or healer would do to convey a blessing. He may have even gone so far as to hug the leper, but that is less probable, especially given the culture and cultural expectations of both the leper and the people.

On a lexical note, there is some confusion that can occur when studying *hapto* because most lexicographers recognize it as one Greek verb that has different definitions in different voices, something not uncommon. Nevertheless, James Strong, author of Strong's concordance, assigned a different Strong's number to *haptomai*, the middle voice of the verb. Thus there appears to be two words in Strong's Concordance and The Englishman's Greek Concordance, but only one word in Thayer and most other Greek lexicons.

1:44. "See *that* you say nothing to anyone." Jesus often said this when he healed people. (cp. Matt. 9:30, blind men; Mark 7:36, a deaf person; Luke 8:56, a dead girl). On the other hand, he told some of the people he healed to spread the news (cp. Mark 5:19). The reason Jesus told people to not talk about their healing is never explicitly stated, and there are likely various reasons for it. One reason would be the often infectious doubt and unbelief that comes from scoffers who hear of the deliverance which could adversely affect the person who was healed. Another reason would be the personal privacy of the individual, who would often be immediately elevated to "movie star status" in their community, as happened to Lazarus. Still another reason would be likely especially in cases such as this healing, the need for Jesus to not be thought of as "unclean" or worse, as "contagious," in his culture. Touching a leper made the person unclean (Lev. 15:7), and since the cause of leprosy was unknown, not only were people with leprosy scrupulously avoided, but no doubt sometimes people who touched lepers were looked upon with suspicion and avoided.

2:1. "at home." The Greek phrase is *en oikos*, and it does not mean "in a house" or "in the house," as if it was Peter's house. The phrases *en oikos* and *eis oikos* (Mark 3:20) are

standard Greek phrases or idioms equivalent to our "at home." Jesus moved to Capernaum after the people of his hometown, Nazareth, tried to kill him (Luke 4:29-31; cp. Matt. 4:13). Jesus either bought or rented a house in Capernaum, because John 2:12 indicates he even moved his family there. Shortly after Jesus moved to Capernaum, it became known as his "own city" (Matt. 9:1).

According to Mark 2:1, Jesus was "at home" when the people crowded his house to such a degree that men had to let a paralyzed man down through the roof (2:4). This was one of the times that the amazing love and compassion that Jesus had for people was clearly visible, because he was much more concerned about the man and amazed by the faith of those men with him than he was concerned about any damage that was done to his house, which was no doubt repaired reasonably quickly.

One of the reasons Jesus likely picked to move to Capernaum was that it was on the Via Maris, the "Road of the Sea," which was the great trade route from Egypt in the south to Damascus in Syria and on to Mesopotamia (see note on Matt. 4:15). The fact that the Via Maris passed by Capernaum helps explain why that city had a centurion, which meant having Roman troops stationed in town, and a tollhouse so revenue could be collected from the passing caravans (Matt. 2:14). Capernaum was thus a cosmopolitan town with much commerce and opportunity. No wonder, Jesus was so disappointed at the overall reception he got in Capernaum, despite the fact the people were so proud of their town and Jesus referred to it as "exalted." So many people, yet such a small group of them really believed. Thus he said, "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the grave, for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom that were done in you, it would have remained until this day."

Jesus Christ chose Capernaum to be his home town after he left Nazareth, he chose a cosmopolitan town where there would be plenty of opportunity to share the Word and reach others, as well as opportunity for others to more easily reach him.

2:7. "He speaks defaming words." The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) is transliterated (not translated) from the Greek into English as "blasphemy." In English, "blasphemy" is only used in reference to God. However, in Greek, *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* (the noun) did not have to refer to God or a god, although they could, but were common words that were used of someone speaking against another. The primary meanings were showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. In this case, the religious leaders thought it was insulting to God's reputation that Jesus would forgive sins. (For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3).

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" See Matthew 9:8 note on "authority given to men."

2:14. "Levi." This is another name for the Apostle Matthew.

2:15. "his house." Matthew's house. Luke 5:29 makes it clear that it is Matthew's house (Matthew is called Levi in Mark 2:13-17, and Luke 5:27-30). Matthew was a tax collector, and so it makes sense that his friends were tax collectors and "sinners," which is why so many people like that were at the dinner. See note on Matt. 9:10.

2:16. "and drinks," which appears in many versions, was added by copyists, prob. to harmonize with Luke 5:30. There is strong evidence that it is not original.

2:18. "fasting." See note on Matthew 9:14.

2:21. "No one sews." See note on Matthew 9:16.

2:22. "No one puts new wine." See note on Matthew 9:17.

3:3. Christ told the man to stand up in the middle of the crowd. The healing would be performed by a word, not by a touch. He did not ask the man to come up front, but healed him in the middle of the crowd, right where he was.
3:9. "crush." The Greek *thlibō* (#2346 θλίβω) is *to press* (as grapes), *press hard upon* (Thayer, *Lexicon*). The versions are split between "press upon" and "crush," but the people were already pressing upon him (v. 10). He wanted to be sure they did not crush him.
3:16. Jesus continues the tradition of God and other ancient rulers by changing the names of those whom he rules. Historically, changing someone's name might be done to prove your power over someone, but Jesus would not have done it if Peter, James and John were not sold out to him. Notice that he does not change Judas' name. Cp. Gen. 17:5 and 15; 32:28; 2 Sam. 12:24 and 25; Jer. 20:3; Gen. 41:45; 2 Chron. 36:4; 2 Kings 24:17; Dan. 1:7).
3:20. "into his house." The Greek phrase is *eis oikos*, and it does not mean "into a house" or "into the house," as if it was Peter's house. The phrases *eis oikos* and *en oikos* (Mark 2:1) are standard Greek phrases or idioms equivalent to our "at home" (see commentary note on Mark 2:1).
3:21. "those who were close to him." The Greek is *para* (#3844 παρά), a preposition usually meaning "beside." Thus the book of Mark is vague here, saying only that these people were those who were beside him. This is a case when we have to rely on other parallel records to give the details, and we learn what happened from the scope of Scripture. Matthew 12:46 and Luke 8:19 let us know that this group of people is his mother and brothers. This verse is a clear indication that Jesus' step-father, Joseph, was dead, otherwise he would have been leading the group. That means Joseph died between the time Jesus was 12 (Luke 2:42) and the time he started his ministry. He had worked with his father, the carpenter, and had become a carpenter himself (Mark 6:3). This group "set out" to take him. They arrive in verse 31.
3:22. The versions differ as to whether this is one statement by the scribes, or two statements. The context seems to support two statements, because the "were saying…".
3:27. "binds." The word "bind" (*deō*) was a common word for bind, and one of its uses was "to describe the 'binding' power of curses" (Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek NT*). The context is the casting out of demons (v. 28), so the "binding" in this verse refers to binding a demon and making it powerless by the power of God. See commentary on Matt. 12:29.
3:28. "defaming talk...defame." The Greek noun *blasphemia* (#988 βλασφημία) and the verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) are transliterated (not translated) from the Greek into English as "blasphemy." In English, "blasphemy" is only used in reference to God. However, in Greek, *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* (the noun) did not have to refer to God or a god, although they could, but were common words that were used of someone speaking against another. The primary meanings were showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3). The two uses of "defame" in this verse inflected differently is the figure of speech *polyptoten*. See Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*.
3:29. "defames." See note in verse 3:28.
3:31. "Arrive." They started out in verse 21.

3:32. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).
4:1. "facing the sea." The crowd was on the land, and Jesus was in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, so the crowd was "facing the sea." (cp. Lenski).
4:3. The Parable of the Sower. Perhaps it should be more accurately referred to as, "The Parable of the Soil." It is also in Matt. 13:3ff and Luke 8:5ff. See commentary on Matthew 13:3.

"Listen!" The Greek is *akouō* (#191 ἀκούω), which means to hear, to listen, or to understand, and it is in the imperative mood. Coupled with *idou* ("Pay attention!) it is an extremely powerful way to say that we better pay attention to what Jesus is saying in the parable.

"Pay attention!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).
4:9. "Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!" This is almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15, and for an explanation of the exclamation, see the commentary on that verse. This verse is longer, reading, "Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen," while the occurrences in Matthew read, "Anyone who has ears had better listen!"
4:12. Quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10. Some texts such as the Byzantine Text from which the KJV was translated, read "of sins" at the end of the verse, but scholars are now aware that this is an explanatory gloss that worked its way into the text.

"so that…" For this quotation from Isaiah and the purpose of parables, see commentary on Matthew 13:13. The "so that" is a *hina* + subjunctive purpose-result clause: see entry on Matt. 2:15, "resulting in…what was spoken being fulfilled." To fully understand this passage, we must see how Matthew's record portrays the human side of the events, John's the spiritual side, and Mark and Luke's records combine the two into one.
4:23. "Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!" This is the same Greek phrase as occurs in Mark 4:9 (see note there), and almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15. For an explanation of the exclamation, see the commentary on that Matthew 11:15. Jesus emphasized his teaching that everything we do will be disclosed on Judgment day with this solemn command and warning.
4:36. "just as he was." This is a very important verse that shows us how hard Jesus pushed himself to serve and bless people. He was exhausted from serving. That is why he went right to sleep in the boat. The Devil knew he was exhausted, and tried to kill him off, thinking he might be too weak to really defend himself and calm the storm.
4:39. In verse 38 he was awakened, the verb in v. 39 is stronger. He was not "sleepy" or "just coming to his senses" as so many do when they are awakened. He became fully awake.

"subdued." In this context, *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω) has a technical meaning: it is used in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon. Jesus subdued the storm, which was no doubt caused by a demon, by the power of God he wielded, which he expressed in words. The power came from God and was used by Jesus. Jesus did not gain control over the storm by some "magic words" or formula that he used. "It is not a magical incantation...it is powerful Word of the Son" (Gerhard Kittle, *Theological*

Dictionary, ἐπιτιμάω Vol. 2, p. 626). For a more complete explanation, see commentary on Mark 1:25.

"Hush!" The Greek *siopao* (#4623). "To refrain from speaking or making a sound, keep silent, say nothing, make no sound" (BDAG). Although this word gets translated "Peace" in many versions, it is not the standard word for peace.

5:3. "in the tombs." The Greek word "in" (*en*) can be "in" or, as many versions, "among," but since the hillsides of that area east of the Sea of Galilee are steep and have many cave-tombs, it is not likely he lived "among" the tombs. That would be akin to living on a hillside with some cave-tombs around. It is much more likely that he lived inside a cave-tomb, but what the state of dead bodies he would be around were we are not told. They could be rotting, or have turned to dust.

"Be bound!" As with the word "subdued" (above), the Greek word *phimoō* (#5392 φιμόω) has a technical meaning in this context. Ordinarily *phimoō* means to close the mouth with a muzzle or to silence. However, it was used in Greek magic to denote the binding of a person with a spell. Moulton and Milligan write that it can refer to "the *binding* of a person by means of a spell, so as to make him powerless to harm" (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. Cp. A. Nyland, *The Source NT*; footnote on Matt. 22:12 and her translation: "Be bound!"). The Greek conveys a spiritual power behind the command that the English, "Be still," simply does not convey. Jesus did not just command the storm—and the demon causing it—to be still—he bound it with the power of his word. See commentary on Mark 1:25.

5:6. "bowed before him." See note on Matthew 2:2.

5:7. "What do I have in common with you." See note, Matt. 8:29.

"torture me." See note Matt. 8:29.

5:12. "Let us enter into them." This is a command clause composed of *hina* + subjunctive mood in Greek. See commentary on John 9:3, "let the works of God be revealed in him."

5:23. "Having come." Lenski points out that in certain cases the Greek word hina [untranslated] simply introduces an imperative, not a purpose clause. Here, it is the imperative of prayer, which is why some versions, fill in the "ellipsis" with "I pray."

5:28. "was saying." She talked to herself (cp. Matt. 9:21) over and over.

5:34. "made you whole." The Greek *sozo*, in the context of sickness, is to be made whole or to be healed. In the context of everlasting life, it is to be "rescued, saved."

"affliction." The Greek *mastix* (#3148 μάστιξ) is literally a whip, and was used metaphorically of a whipping, affliction, disease, etc.

5:42. "for she was twelve years old." This describes why she could walk even though she had been referred to as "little" in this and other Gospel records.

"amazed…with a great amazement." This is the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of both noun and verb forms together (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). It highlights the degree of astonishment, they were greatly amazed.

6:1. "his own city." The context is clear that this is referring to Nazareth, even though he had moved to Capernaum, and that was now considered his home (see note on Mark 2:1).

6:2. "being done." Present tense. Astonishingly, the people of Nazareth, without faith themselves, were able to admit that Jesus was doing miracles.

6:8. "staff." In Matthew and Luke, it seems Jesus said not to take a staff. For the apparent contradiction, see commentary on Matthew 10:10.

6:14. "from among the dead." See note on Romans 4:24.

6:15. "Elijah." For information on why the people thought that Elijah would come, and why John the Baptist was called "Elijah," see commentary on Matthew 17:10.
6:16. The Greek is more emphatic than just, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." The way it is written, Herod had no doubt that John was both dead (because he had killed John) and raised. Wuest says: "raised out from among those who were dead."
6:21. "military commanders." The Greek word designates a Chiliarch. See commentary on John 18:12.
6:48. "the fourth watch of the night." A Roman "watch" was three hours, and there were four of them. The first was 6-9 PM, the second 9-midnight, the third midnight to 3 AM, and the fourth 3-6 AM. Then started the 12 hours of the day, 6-7 AM being the first, such that the sixth hour (Luke 23:44; Acts 10:9) was our noon, the "ninth hour" (Matt. 27:45) was our 3 PM. The feeding of the 5,000 took place in the area we know as Bethsaida-Julius, on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 9:10). The disciples left that general area and headed for "Bethsaida" (Mark 6:45; cp. "Bethsaida in Galilee, John 12:21), which was apparently a small fishing village to the southwest of Capernaum. Thus the total distance the apostles had to row was likely somewhat less than 5 miles. This should have been an easy journey, but the wind was so against them they had rowed for hours and were no doubt incredibly frustrated and near exhaustion.
6:49. An apparition. The word *phantasma* means "something that appears," from *phaino*, to appear. Thus an apparition. The only other appearance of the word is in Matthew 14:26, where it is used in a sentence and translated "ghost."
6:20. "feared." Better than "was afraid of" here because there is an element of holy awe with the fear.
6:33. "knew *where they were going*." (Cp. Brown and Comfort Interlinear, and Lenski). It is not that the people "recognized them." Jesus had just been with them. They knew both Jesus and the apostles well. And, had they been sensitive at all, they also would have known why he was leaving—to get some privacy. But they were selfish, and knowing where he would go to be alone, got there before he did.

"went before them." This, and the start of verse 34, which is translated in many versions as "came ashore" or something similar, creates a contradiction with John 6:3-5. The crowd was not waiting on the shore for Jesus. If it were, he would have seen the people long before he came ashore. John makes it clear that the crowd, even if it was ahead of Jesus and the group with him for a little while, eventually lagged behind. Thus, Jesus arrived with his disciples on the shore and spent some time with them before the crowd assembled. Jesus "came out" of his retreat and saw the multitude assembled, and had compassion on them.
6:45. "immediately he compelled." The feeding of the five thousand (much more when you include the women and children who were there) is one of the few events that is recorded in all four Gospels. It is watershed time for Jesus Christ, and needs to be studied from all four Gospels to really understand it and what happened after it. After the feeding, the huge crowd became convinced that Jesus was their Messiah and they were going to come and take him by force and make him their king (John 6:14, 15). Jesus had to act swiftly to avoid a potential revolution which would have certainly also included charges against him by the Romans that he was a revolutionary, which would have no doubt landed him in prison.

As well as realizing the intent of the crowd, he recognized that his apostles were basically of the same mind as the crowd. They too were tired of Roman domination, Jewish perversion of religion, and the cares of the world, and they too were anxious for the Kingdom of God to come, which Jesus had been saying was at hand ever since he started his ministry. It was a very real possibility that the apostles could have been swept away with the emotion and conviction of the crowd and joined in the revolt. To prevent this, Jesus acted decisively. First, "immediately he compelled" his disciples to leave the scene (Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45). He made them get into a boat and head west to Gennesaret (Matt. 14:34; Mark 6:53), and the next day they went from there a few miles northeast to Capernaum (John 6:59). Then he dealt with the crowd and sent it away (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:45). This was not easy to do. The people had to be calmed down and convinced to leave. Mark 6:45 says Jesus "was sending" the crowd away, the verb being in the present tense, indicating the action was ongoing, taking some time. It was not as easy as saying, "Go home now." Jesus worked with the people to convince them to leave.

Now finally alone, with no disciples and no crowds, Jesus went to a mountain to pray (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; John 6:15). He needed wisdom and needed God's help to keep his ministry on track, he needed to keep defeating the temptation to avoid the cross and try to become king immediately, and no doubt he prayed hard for his apostles that they would not be led away by false Messianic expectations. We get a glimpse of the wisdom and direction that God gave Jesus in his teaching and action when we read John 6:22-70, which occurred the day after the five thousand were fed (John 6:22). Jesus made a decisive shift in his ministry from just demonstrating the power of God for people and teaching them, to starting to require commitment from them (John 6:29, 53-58).

The reaction of the crowd was about the same then as it is today: most people talk about loving God and living the Word, but when you really require them to do it, they refuse. The people in Jesus' audience said, "This is a hard saying: who is able to hear it?" (John 6:60), Even Jesus' disciples grumbled about it (John 6:61). Jesus challenged his disciples about their unbelief, and many of them left (John 6:66). Jesus, most likely hurt and angered by the selfishness of the crowd and many of the disciples, turned to the twelve and asked, "Will you also go away?" Thankfully, they did not.

There are many lessons that can be learned from this account. One is that people are selfish. They are now, and they always have been. Jesus did not convince them otherwise, and neither will we. We must do what Jesus did: work with the people who want to work and let the others go. Another lesson is to not allow ourselves to be tricked and trapped by worldly aspirations. No doubt Jesus would have loved to have come into his kingdom without the pain of rejection and crucifixion, but it was not the will, nor the way, of God. Selflessness, humility and giving are the godly way forward.

Another thing we can learn from the account is that sometimes quick and decisive action is needed to keep us out of trouble. Had Jesus not compelled the disciples to immediately leave the scene, he could have been fighting a battle on two fronts and had a hard time indeed. Another lesson is that prayer is essential for success. If Jesus needed to pray, surely we do too. One more thing we can learn is that the wisdom from God may be to change the direction of what you are doing. The result of what happened after Jesus' great miracle, the potential revolt against Rome, and his hours of prayer was to change the direction of his ministry by adding that he require things from his disciples. This

seemed to have the wrong effect because many disciples left, but the history of the early church shows us that those who stayed were tried and tested, and able to carry on the work of Christ after he ascended.

"toward Bethsaida." Jesus sent them "toward" (the Greek is *pros*, "toward") Bethsaida, which is nearer to Capernaum than they were on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, but the eventual destination was Capernaum (John 6:16). Bethsaida was almost a suburb of Capernaum, which was a major city, and site of a tax office and Roman troops, so for travel purposes, the names Bethsaida and Capernaum are synonymous. However, the boat landed at Gennesaret (see note on Matt. 14:34).

6:53. "Gennesaret." This is where Jesus and the disciples landed, and it is confirmed in Matthew 14:34 (see note there).

7:1. Mark can be read to mean that only the scribes came from Jerusalem, but Matthew 15:1 is clear that the entire delegation came from there.

7:3. "to the wrist." The Greek literally reads "with the fist." This is a good example of a custom being so obscure that translating it into the text would only confuse the reader. Edersheim gives the best explanation we have seen, and Young's Literal Translation renders according to his explanation.

> "The water was poured on both hands…. The hands were lifted up, so as to make the water run to the wrist, in order to ensure that the whole hand was washed, and the water polluted by the hand did not again run down the fingers. …But there was one point on which special stress was laid. In the 'first effusion,' which was all that originally was required when the hands were Leviticaly 'defiled,' the water had to run down to the wrist. Fn. "The language of the Mishnah…can only refer to the wrist. Fn. The rendering 'wash diligently' gives no meaning; that 'with the fist' is not in accordance with Jewish Law; while "up to the elbow' is not only contrary to Jewish Law, but apparently based on a wrong rendering of [the Hebrew]" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

The general uncertainty among commentators, however, about what the Greek texts, "with the fist" means, explains the huge number of variations in the translations: "oft" (KJV), "carefully" (NASB), " ceremonial washing" (NIV), "thoroughly" (NRSV), "to the wrist" (YLT), etc. "wash." Greek = *nipto*, to wash.

7:4. "they bathe themselves." The Greek is *baptizō* (#907 βαπτίζω), which means "…Properly, 1. *to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge*. **2.** *to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water*; in the middle and the 1 aorist passive *to wash oneself, bathe*; so Mark 7:4….metaphorically, *to overwhelm,* as … *to be overwhelmed with calamities,* of those who must bear them, Matt. 20:22f Rec.; Mark 10:38 f; Luke 12:50 (Thayer). Many commentators have had problems with this verse, believing that even the religious Jews did not bathe themselves each time they came from the marketplace, but the text seems clear, and we must assume that some people did that, because his audience did not charge him with an absurdity.

Some versions have "and couches" (YLT) or "and tables" (KJV) after "copper vessels," Metzger (*Textual Commentary*) writes, "It is difficult to decide whether the words…were added by copyists who were influenced by the legislation of Leviticus 15, or whether the words were omitted (*a*) accidentally because of homoeoteleuton or (*b*) deliberately because the idea of washing or sprinkling beds seemed to be quite

incongruous. In view of the balance of probabilities, as well as the strong witnesses that support each reading, a majority of the Committee preferred to retain the words, but to enclose them within square brackets." We decided to leave them out, following the original translation of the ASV.

7:6. Quoted from Isaiah 29:13.

7:9. "tradition." The Greek word is *paradosis* (#3862 παράδοσις), and it means something that is handed over, or something that is handed down. Thus it can mean surrender or arrest, or it can refer to a "tradition." Traditions can be a great help to people. God established traditions in the OT, such as keeping the Passover feast every year. Jesus himself started the tradition of "the Lord's Supper." However, there are Christians who believe that any tradition created by man is an offense to God and should not be practiced or condoned. How should Christians view traditions? It seems clear that we should view traditions the same way Jesus did. There were hundreds of traditions in the Judaism of the time of Jesus (cp. Mark 7:4), but the ones he spoke against fall into several categories.

One category that Jesus spoke against was traditions of men that had, in the minds of the religious leaders, become equal to the commands of God. No matter how helpful they are or holy they seem, and no matter how many years they have been observed, traditions are only traditions, they are not commandments, and should not be treated as such. When traditions are treated like commandments, first, the words of man become elevated to the status of the word of God, and second, someone who is unable or unwilling to keep the tradition is almost always treated badly by those who do.

Another category of tradition that Jesus spoke against was traditions that could not be kept without ignoring or rejecting the commandments of God (Mark 7:8, 9). These traditions, by their very nature, are harmful. Jesus cited the tradition of giving "to God" the support that elderly parents needed (Mark 7:10-13). Of course, the support that was supposedly given "to God" ended up enriching and empowering the religious leaders, and the honor that God commanded that children give to parents was ignored.

A third category of tradition that is harmful is a tradition that has become a burden to a Christian's life and walk, instead of being a blessing. The religious leaders had many burdensome traditions that they enforced (Matt. 23:4). A godly tradition is to be a blessing and bring people closer to God. A tradition that makes living a godly life into a burden should not be kept.

There are many traditions in the Church, and very few are kept by all Christian denominations. Most are not harmful, and can be helpful. For example, dressing up for Sunday church is a tradition in some denominations, and is not harmful unless it takes on the force of a command and someone who comes not dressed up is scorned or rejected. It can be helpful in that it helps some people take their worship time more seriously. On the other hand, the tradition of praying to "the saints" is practiced in some denominations, but is against the command of God and therefore harmful.

Christians should view traditions like Christ did. Even if a tradition is not "in the Bible," it can still bring people closer to God in a very meaningful way. However, if a tradition begins to take on the force of a commandment, or if it makes godly living a burden, or especially if it contradicts the Bible or can only be kept at the expense of ignoring a biblical command, then the words spoken by Isaiah more than 2500 years ago still apply: "in vain do they worship me" (Mark 7:7; cp. Isa. 29:13).

7:10. Quoted from Exod. 20:12 and Exod. 21:17.

7:16. This verse is omitted in REV. This verse is absent from some important early texts such as ℵ, B, and L. It seems to be a scribal addition, perhaps to parallel 4:9 or 4:23. There seems to be much more likelihood that the verse was added to later texts than removed from earlier ones. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*.
7:22. "insults." The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning of as they were used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmia*, see note on Matt. 9:3).
7:27. "dog," see note on Matthew 15:26.
7:30. "having gone out." Greek = *exerchomai* (ἐξέρχομαι 1. to move out of or away from an area. a. of animate entities *go out, come out, go away, retire*). Demons can inhabit the mind or body, and thus when they leave they are "gone out."
8:9. This is the shorter reading represented in NA 27.
8:18. Quoted from Jer. 5:21.
8:28. "Elijah." For information on why the people thought that Elijah would come, and why John the Baptist was called "Elijah," see commentary on Matthew 17:10.
8:33. "Get behind me, Satan." See note on Matthew 16:23.

"have in mind." The Greek *phronein* means to have in mind something that sways the thinking (Cp. Lenski).
9:2. For an explanation of the Transfiguration, see Matthew 17:2.
9:6. "say." The Greek is *apokrithē* (ἀποκριθῇ), technically, "answer," but in this case he was "answering" the situation, not a question. Hendrickson (New Testament Commentary) states: "Here, as in verse 5 and often, the verb ἀποκριθῇ has a wide meaning, so that τί ἀποκριθῇ means, "what he should say," or "what to say."
9:9. "out from among the dead." See note Romans 4:24. Wuest: "out from amongst the dead."
9:10. The disciples did not expect Jesus to be killed and then raised from the dead. That is simply not what most first-century Jews believed about the Messiah, so they did not understand what Jesus was speaking of when he spoke of being raised from the dead (cp. Matt. 16:22; Luke 18:34; John 20:9).
9:11. **"Elijah."** John the Baptist was "Elijah." See commentary notes on Matthew 17:10.
9:12. "and *yet*" (Cp. Lenski, NASB). Jesus was asking the question, without answering it, how it could be that if Elijah came and restored everything, there was any need for the suffering of the Messiah. The disciples did not believe that the Messiah would die (and did not truly understand that until after his resurrection). Thus, Jesus is just trying to get them to open their mind to other possibilities for the Messiah than they had learned in Synagogue. The question is a good one, because although the death of the Messiah was veiled to the disciples, the fact that he would suffer should have been clear to them. But why even that if John did indeed restore all things? The restoration of John was a spiritual restoration, turning people's hearts back to God. It was not a political restoration, or a full restoration in which the Devil and his minions were defeated, the curse removed from the earth, etc.

"and restores." The Greek uses just the participle, "restoring."
9:18. "strong enough." The Greek is *ischuō* (#2480 ἰσχύω), which means strength. This verse gives us a glimpse into the spiritual battle that can wage when demons live inside a body. It takes spiritual strength to cast them out. That strength comes from faith (Matt.

17:20), which is connected to one's prayer life (Mark 9:29). Another example of strength in the spiritual battle is Revelation 12:8. The Devil and his demons wanted to remain in heaven, but they were not strong enough to fight against Michael and the angels. To say the apostles "could not" cast out the demon is correct, but not helpful, because then we have no idea why. The Greek is more helpful, saying that the spirit did not come out because the apostles were not spiritually strong enough. Spiritual power in the life of a believer is usually not a matter of either having it or not, it is usually a matter of how much power one has, and do we have enough to get the job at hand done for the Lord.
9:25. "subdued." The Greek word translated "subdued" is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω). In this context, *epitimaō* has a technical meaning: it is used in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon. See commentary on Mark 1:25.
9:31. "Is being delivered." The Greek is *paradidōmi* (#3860 παραδίδωμι), and in this context it means to give into the hands of another; to deliver up treacherously; by betrayal to cause someone to be taken. It is present tense, but is an example of the "prophetic present," meaning the present tense is stated, but it is prophetic of something that will happen in the future. Thus, some versions render the verb, "will be delivered over" or something similar. The prophetic perfect has "the note of certain expectation" (Lenski), because it is spoken as if the action is occurring at that very time. Jesus' betrayal was not far away. For more on the prophetic present and prophetic perfect see the notes on Luke 3:9 and Eph. 2:6.
9:32. Jesus taught about his suffering, death, and resurrection many times. However, in spite of Jesus' clearly stating he would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead, the disciples never understood what he meant. This gives us some very important insight into the how the Jews at the time of Jesus viewed their Messiah. Just as they never expected a virgin birth (note Mary's reaction to the angel's message--Luke 1:34), they never expected their Messiah to suffer and die. This verse and others, such as Luke 18:34, make that plain. Even after his death and resurrection, upon seeing the empty tomb, they did not understand what had happened (John 20:9). They finally understood from both the Scriptures and from the physical evidence that he would be resurrected when he appeared to them when they were behind locked doors the Sunday after the crucifixion (Luke 24:44, 45). (cp. note Matthew 16:21).
9:34. "greatest." This is not "greatest" in the sense of who had done the most miracles, or had the greatest faith. Jesus telling them that the one who is greatest must be the servant of all (v. 35), shows us that "greatest" refers to the person with the most authority. In the patron-client society of the biblical culture and Greco-Roman world, the "greatest" person was the one who had the most authority and ruled the others (cp. 10:42). Jesus was trying to instill in his followers that we must have a servants heart, and the greatest one of all must be the most willing to serve.
9:42. "lake" from the context. He was teaching in Capernaum, right beside the Sea of Galilee, which is actually a lake.
9:43. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22. For information on annihilation in the lake of fire, see commentary on Revelation 20:10.
9:44. This entire verse (and v. 46) was an addition to the text, and so is omitted in the REV, just as it is omitted in many other modern versions as well. Metzger (*Textual Commentary*) simply makes the comment that these verses are "lacing in important early witnesses" [i.e. manuscripts] and "were added by copyists from v. 48." In other words,

the evidence that this verse, as well as verse 46, were added by copyists is so strong that it is not even debated by scholars. See commentary on 9:48.
9:45. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22. For information on annihilation in the lake of fire, see commentary on Revelation 20:10.
9:46. This entire verse (and v. 44) was an addition to the text, and so is omitted in the REV, just as it is omitted in many other modern versions as well. Metzger (*Textual Commentary*) simply makes the comment that these verses are "lacing in important early witnesses" [i.e. manuscripts] and "were added by copyists from v. 48." In other words, the evidence that this verse, as well as verse 46, were added by copyists is so strong that it is not even debated by scholars. See commentary on 9:48.
9:47. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22. For information on annihilation in the lake of fire, see commentary on Revelation 20:10.
9:48. This verse is quoted from Isaiah 66:24. This verse has been used to prove that people "burn in hell forever," but that is not what it is teaching. It is teaching that unsaved people are totally destroyed by being thrown into Gehenna, here being used for the future Lake of Fire. Gehenna was the garbage dump of Jerusalem (see commentary note on Matt. 5:22). Garbage, unwanted rubbish, and even dead animals were thrown into Gehenna and destroyed. The fires in the valley burned up everything that could be burned, and the maggots and worms ate up the vegetable and animal waste. Everyone in Christ's audience knew this. No one thought that the wood, rags, or other burnables that had been thrown into Gehenna burned forever in the valley, or that animal and vegetable garbage lasted forever, eternally being consumed by worms. Christ's point in comparing the Valley of Gehenna to the future Lake of Fire was graphic and clear: if a person was thrown into Gehenna on the Day of Judgment, he would never be restored, he would be totally consumed until totally gone; annihilated.

One thing that helps us understand Jesus' teaching is knowing that the verse in Isaiah is not speaking of living people suffering, but dead bodies in the process of being destroyed. This is clear from reading the verse itself and paying attention to the vocabulary: "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind" (Isa. 66:24). Isaiah 66 ties the Valley of Gehenna and the Lake of Fire together, because it seems clear from the context of Isaiah 66 that the dead bodies the people see are in the vicinity of the Valley of Gehenna, and Revelation

In reading Isaiah chapter 66, we can see that the closing verses are about God's judgment on the wicked, and how He will destroy them with fire and sword (Isa. 66:16). This is a general picture of God's judgment, and could refer to either to the Battle of Armageddon just before the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 19:19-21) or to the Final War at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:7-10). At some point after the battles, the righteous people go to the place where God has thrown the unsaved, and they are all dead, they are not suffering. Isaiah said the righteous will look upon the "dead bodies," and the Hebrew word *peger* (#06297 פֶּגֶר) is always used of dead bodies, never living ones. Those dead bodies were being consumed by worms and fire, and eventually would be completely gone. So we see that Isaiah is not portraying the suffering of the wicked, but their final fate: destruction.

When Jesus quoted Isaiah 66:24 in his teaching, he quoted it to reinforce his point, which was the same point that Isaiah was making: that there is no restitution for the

wicked, only complete annihilation. Jesus was not modifying or correcting what Isaiah wrote. Rather, Jesus was teaching about Gehenna, and quoted Isaiah to help emphasize the point he was making about the destruction of the wicked. In another teaching, Jesus made it clear that God would destroy both "body and soul" in Gehenna (Matt. 10:28).

"**worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."** This is not picturing everlasting torment, but rather that the worm and fire will not stop until everything in Gehenna has been annihilated. Firemen today are very familiar with house fires that "cannot be quenched," and do not go out until the house is consumed to ash. Similarly, people who vermapost (compost by using worms), are very familiar with the fact that as long as they keep adding garbage to the worm-bins, the worms there do not die off, but multiply. They eat and multiply until they are given no more food, at which point they starve and die. We disagree with Lenski and other commentators who insist that these words portray everlasting torment. For example, Lenski writes, "A fire that is 'unquenchable' is by that very fact eternal." We disagree. The text simply states the fire is "not quenched." No one puts the fire out, but that does not mean the fire does not go out when the fuel it is burning is gone. "Not quenched" does not mean "eternal." It would be possible that "not quenched" could refer to a fire that burned forever if the other biblical evidence supported that meaning, but the other biblical evidence supports the eventual destruction of the wicked (see Rev. 20:10 commentary on annihilation).

When people are thrown into Gehenna after they are judged on the Day of Judgment, the fire there will not be able to be put out, and the worms there will not die until there is nothing left to consume and all the sinners have been annihilated (for more on annihilation, see commentary on Rev. 20:10). [It is possible that there are no literal worms in Gehenna, but Christ mentioned them because he was comparing Gehenna to the final Lake of Fire in which sinners will be annihilated].

The Bible does not describe people's suffering in the Lake of Fire, it simply notes that there will be some suffering there (The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable, not literal. See commentary on Luke 16:19). Nevertheless, as the teaching about "eternal hell" continued to be developed and embellished throughout Church history, there was a tremendous fascination and emphasis on "hell." This is well represented in Christian art through the centuries, and in literature such as the epic poem, *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (the first part of which is titled "Inferno," which is Italian for "Hell"). It is worth noting that there was such a fascination with hell that somehow the phrase about the worm not dying and the fire not being quenched was added two more times in Mark in some manuscripts than it was in the original text (10:44 and 46). (Edward Fudge makes a more complete examination of destruction in Gehenna in his book, *The Fire that Consumes*.

10:1. "from there." From Capernaum (9:33). (if there are any literal worms in Gehenna, they may be simply an illustration from the Gehenna the people were used to),

10:4. Quoted from Deut. 24:1.

10:6-8. Quoted from Gen. 1:27; 2:24.

10:7. Quoted from Gen. 2:24, occurs also in Matthew 19:5.

"be glued to." The Greek is *proskollaō* (#4347 προσκολλάω), and it literally means to glue to or to glue upon. Thus it was used to join oneself to someone, or to cleave or stick to that person. We still use the idiom of glue today to express extreme attachment, and say things such as "He stuck to his coach like glue," or "He is glued to

the TV set." In this verse the meaning of "glue" becomes very important. When a man and woman marry, they become "one flesh." That is a spiritual reality and has important physical implications as well, so it is important to bring the meaning of the Greek text fully into the English.

10:17. "life *in the* Age to Come." This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom. See commentary on this phrase at John 3:15.

10:19. Quoted from Exod. 20:12-16.

10:23. "will be." The future tense "will be" is supplied from the verb "to enter" which is a future tense. A more literal rendering of the verb, and one that would maintain the future tense of "to enter," would be to say, "How difficult it will be to enter the kingdom of God for those who have wealth!" But this is more difficult in English.

10:27. "With people...with God...with God." The key to understanding this passage, and the parallel passage in Matthew 19:26, is the word "with," which is the Greek preposition *para* (#3844 παρά). In this case, the preposition *para* is modifying "people" and "God," which are both in the dative case (and all three uses in Matt. 19:26 are in the dative case). When *para* is with the dative case in reference to people, it means "beside" or "with." The point that Jesus is making is that when it comes to getting saved, human effort alone will never get anyone saved. There is no amount of human effort, even if others are "with" you and helping, that will get a person saved and into the Kingdom of God. Robertson writes: "The impossible by the side of men becomes possible by the side of God" (*Word Pictures in the NT*). Vincent writes: "Man cannot save himself or his fellow" (*Word Studies*; Matt. 19:26).

If a person wants to be saved, if he teams up with God, his salvation becomes not only possible, but assured, because, along with God, all things are possible. Peter responds to Jesus' statement by pointing out that he and the others have certainly teamed up with God, saying, "We have left everything and followed you."

This verse shows that salvation is indeed a team effort between God and the sinner. It is not, like some theologians teach, that God saves who He wants and rejects who He wants, or that salvation is totally accomplished by God apart from human will. In that light, the preposition *para* should not be translated "for," because that significantly changes the meaning of the verse. When salvation is "with" God, it is a team effort. The sinner is working "with" God, and salvation can be accomplished. If we change the "with" to "for," then the meaning of the verse totally changes: "For people it is impossible, but not for God, for all things are possible for God." Now the verse says nothing about teamwork, but just makes the point that people cannot be saved by their own efforts, but God can save anyone. However, that is not what the verse is saying, or the Greek text means. We know that God wants all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and if He could save people without them wanting or asking for salvation, then everyone would be. The reason God wants everyone to be saved but not everyone will be, is that salvation is a team effort—the person must want it and ask for it before God can save the person, and not everyone wants to be saved.

10:28. "See." The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).

10:30. "life *in the* Age to Come." This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom. See commentary on this phrase at John 3:15.

10:32. "amazed...afraid." The amazement and even fear that the disciples were experiencing is natural. For some time now the Jews in Jerusalem had been trying to arrest and kill Jesus. At the Feast of Dedication (in our December), the Jews were trying to arrest him (John 10:39). Then, when Jesus went back to the Jerusalem area to raise Lazarus from the dead, the Jews made plans to kill him (John 11:12). After that, Jesus made one last itinerary.

10:33. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).

11:2. "in front of." Jesus was traveling from Jericho on what is known as "the Jericho Road," the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. It is only about a 15 mile journey, and thus a person can walk it in one long day, however, it is a steep climb. Jericho is more than 800 feet below sea level, and the Mount of Olives, which Jesus had to climb and from which he would get the view of Jerusalem (Luke 20:41) is over 2,500 feet high, making the ascent well over 3000 feet. Jesus would reach Bethphage and Bethany before he reached the summit of the Mount of Olives.

"colt." This "colt" is not a young horse, but a young donkey (Matt. 21:2-5).

11:9. Quoted from Ps. 118:25, 26.

11:13. "indeed, it was not the season for figs." The question this verse poses to the average reader is, "Why would Jesus curse the fig tree for not having figs if it was not the season for figs?" The answer to that question lies in understanding that, although there were a couple varieties of fig tree in Israel, the common variety produces two crops of figs per year. An early fig grows on the old branch stock that grew the preceding year. This early fig often begins to grow even before there are leaves on the fig tree, although sometimes these early figs and the leaves start to grow at the same time. These early figs usually start developing in March, but may be a little earlier of later depending on the climate, and the circumstances of any given tree (Israel has many different climates, usually somewhat depending on elevation). These early figs mature in June, and the leaves grow and mature along with them. A second crop of figs starts on the new tree growth that sprouts that year, and they generally ripen in August.

Since Mark is recording events around Passover, Jesus would have approached the fig tree in April. Although it was not yet the season for figs, Jesus noticed that this particular tree was in full leaf. If the leaves were fully formed, that meant he could expect the figs of this particular tree to be early too, or at least be far enough along to be somewhat satisfying to eat. This should not surprise us. It often happens in horticulture that a plant is a few weeks earlier than the "regular season." However, when Jesus got to the tree, the situation was not just that the figs it had were not yet ripe, it did not have any figs at all!

This fig tree was a fitting parable of Israel. It was in full leaf and looked very promising, even ahead of the rest of the trees. It should have been a source of great blessing for those who looked for early sustenance coming out of the winter months. Instead it was a liar, promising much but delivering little, deceiving weary travelers and giving them false hope. Jesus cursed it, foreshadowing the curse and destruction that would come upon Israel.

"indeed." The Greek is *gar* (#1063 γάρ), and is usually translated "for" or occasionally "because," and it usually gives the reason for something. However, that use of *gar* does not fit this verse. Jesus did not find only leaves on the fig tree "because" it

was not the season for figs. This phrase is letting us know that, indeed, it was not the general season for figs. But if that was the case, why would Jesus expect figs in the first place? The answer is that this particular tree had leaves, so Jesus could expect to find them on this tree. This use of the *gar* is what some scholars refer to as the "confirmatory gar" and confirms and clarifies what has already been stated. See note on Romans 9:3.
11:17. Quoted from Isaiah 56:7 and Jer. 7:11.
11:23. "sea" in this context. Jesus is teaching in Jerusalem, and the Mediterranean Sea and Dead Sea were the closest and best known bodies of water.
11:24. "believe that you have received them, and you will have them." This verse contains great truth, and great potential to be misunderstood and wrongly applied. Certain faith teachers have taken it to mean that through faith we instantly receive what we ask for, even though it may clearly seem to not be the case, we must nevertheless believe that we have already received what has been asked for. Often, this can lead to unhealthy situations where Christians must pretend that circumstances are not as they are, or feel that they are not having "faith."

This comes from a misguided understanding of the verse. The second half of the verse should settle any thought as to whether the requests have been received—it assumes they have not. This is why it says, "and you **will** (future tense) have them." An understanding of the Greek behind this phrase will further clear things up. To properly understand this verse we must understand the tense of the verb translated "you have received." It is *not* the present tense, as the KJV can give the impression with their rendering, "believe that ye receive *them*." Rather, the verb is in the aorist (past) tense. So understood literally, the verse would not be asking us to believe we have presently received anything, but to believe that we have *already in the past* received what we are presently praying for; then, perplexingly, it ends with the promise that if we so believe, we will in the future receive what we believe has already been received before we even asked for it.

How are we to understand this? Why would God put the verb is the aorist tense? The reason is this verse contains as idiom known as the proleptic aorist (under the category of the idiom of the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6). The proleptic aorist is a form of the figure of speech *heterosis*, where one tense is used instead of another for emphasis. In this case the aorist tense is used for the future tense, speaking as though a yet future event had already come to pass. Wallace explains the proleptic aorist as follows: "An author sometimes uses the aorist for the future to stress the certainty of the event. It involves a "rhetorical transfer" of a future event as though it were past." Here in Mark 11:24 the event of receiving what is prayed for is yet future, but it is put in the past tense ("have received") to emphasize it certainty.
When we understand that this phrase is the idiom of the proleptic aorist, we see that God is not asking us to believe we have already in the past received something we do not really yet have, nor is he asking us to believe we have presently received something we have not yet received; rather, he is asking us to believe we *will* receive our requests in the future. This saves us from the harm of turning biblical belief into make-believe.
11:26. We omit this verse as do most modern versions as being an addition to the text in order to harmonize Matthew and Mark. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*: "Although it might be thought that the sentence was accidentally omitted because of homoeoteleuton,

its absence from early witnesses that represent all text-types makes it highly probable that the words were inserted by copyists in imitation of Mt 6.15."
12:10, 11. Quoted from Ps. 118:22, 23.
12:19. Quoted from Deut. 25:5.
12:24. "Is this not…." This is the figure of speech *Erotesis* (rhetorical question).
12:25. "out from among the dead." See Romans 4:24. (Cp. Wuest)
12:26. Quoted from Exod. 3:6.
12:29, 30. Quoted from Deut. 6:4, 5.
12:31. Quoted from Lev. 19:18.
12:32, 33. Quoted from Deut. 6:4, 5; Deut. 4:35; Lev. 19:18.
12:36. Quoted from Ps. 110:1.

"by the holy spirit." David spoke as God directed him to via the gift of holy spirit that was upon David (see note on Matt. 22:43). Even though the Greek has both articles with holy spirit, *tō pneuma tō hagion* (τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ), it seems to be more of a reference to the gift of holy spirit than it is to the Giver, God. There are many other times the gift of holy spirit has both articles (cp. Luke 3:22; John 14:26; Acts 2:33; 5:32; 10:44, 47; 11:15; 15:8; 19:6; Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 4:8). See note on Matthew 22:43.
12:40. "harsher punishment." We have taken the sense of *krima* (#2917 κρίμα)—along with the KJV, NET, NIV, and HCSB translations—to indicate both the judgment and execution of the sentence (Cp. Lenski). Hence, *krima* becomes "punishment" rather than "condemnation;" and the comparative adjective *perissoteros* (#4055 περισσότερος) becomes "harsher" rather than "greater."
12:42. Two "leptons." The Greek says "lepta" which is the plural of "lepton." The lepton was a small, common, brass coin. Two leptons = one assarion (often abbreviated "as.") and an assarion was 1/16 of a denarius, which was the day's wage for a field worker or soldier (compare it to our minimum wage). Thus, if a denarius was worth $56 ($7 per hour times 8 hours), an assarion (or two leptons) was worth $3.50. Coins are one area where it is hard to translate. We feel that "penny" is misleading. For one thing, at the rates we assigned here, a lepton is worth $1.75. Similarly, while "mite" communicates a small amount, it is unclear, and the reader may think that the Bible is making the point that the woman cast a small amount into the treasury and not realize that it points out exactly how much she cast in. It was a small amount, but it was exactly described in the Biblical text as being two leptons, not just "a small amount."
13:9. "courts." A good translation of the generic use of "Sanhedrin," which was not the "great Sanhedrin" that convened in Jerusalem made up of 70 members, but the concept of "lesser Sanhedrin" that were the Jewish courts that met wherever Jews would be tried by other Jews.
13:14. Quoted from Dan. 11:31.
13:21. "Messiah." See note on Matt. 24:5.
13:22. "Messiahs." See note on Matt. 24:5.
13:24. Quoted from Isaiah13:10.
13:25. Quoted from Isaiah 34:4.
13:26. Quoted from Dan. 7:13.
13:33. Some Greek texts add prayer to this verse, but it is omitted in some early and important witness, and therefore much more likely added to the text than omitted from it.

14:4. This verse is hard to translate, and so the versions differ considerably. A literal rendition would be something like, "There were some being indignant with each other." Of course, they were not being indignant with each other, they were indignant about what they considered a waste of money, and were commenting to each other about it. Some versions say they were indignant "within themselves," or "said to themselves," but that can be misunderstood. The ones who were indignant were saying things among themselves, i.e., among their little disgruntled group, but not within their own minds, as we say, "talking to themselves." The Gospel of John (12:4) lets us know that this verbal poison started with Judas Iscariot, who was a thief and stole from the money that Jesus and the disciples received (John 12:6). From Judas this discontent spread through the room and infected some of the believers. Jesus cut it off quickly and decisively. "Let her alone…" etc. Christians need to learn from this record. A little evil (leaven) goes through the whole loaf of bread. We need to respond quickly to evil.
14:5. "scolded her harshly." See note on John 11:33.
14:27. Quoted from from Zech. 13:7.
14:41. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).
14:42. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!).
14:49. "let the scriptures be fulfilled." This is a command clause. In the original language this is composed of *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) and the verb for "fulfilled," *pleroō* (#4137 πληρόω), in the subjunctive mood. See entry on John 9:3, "let the works of God be revealed in him." It should not be translated as a purpose clause, "*this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures" (such as NASB; NET; NAB; ASV), but as a command clause: "Let the scriptures be fulfilled." Reading it as a purpose clause requires the phrase "this has taken place" to be supplied in order to complete the thought, because it is not in the Greek. The fact that the *hina* + subjunctive clause stands alone makes the command clause a less forced reading.
14:64. "defaming speech." The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning of as they were used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmia*, see note on Matt. 9:3).
15:2. "*It is as* you say." See Matthew 27:11 note on "*It is as* you say."
15:19. "in homage to." See note on Matt. 2:2.
15:20. "mocked." The Greek word translated "mocked" is *empaizō* (#1702 ἐμπαίζω), and means "mock," "make fun of," "ridicule." See note on Matthew 27:29.
15:28. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*: "The earliest and best witnesses of the Alexandrian and the Western types of text lack ver. 28. It is understandable that copyists could have added the sentence in the margin from Lk 22.37…"
15:29. "insults." See note on Matthew 27:39.
15:33. The sixth Roman hour is noon our time.
15:34. The ninth Roman hour is 3 PM our time. This was the start of the Jewish evening, when the Passover Lamb would be slain in the Temple, just a few hundred yards to the west of the Mount of Olives where Christ was crucified.
Quoted from Ps. 22:1.

15:35. Christ was so beaten and swollen, and so dehydrated from loss of blood, that his enunciation was not clear and he was misunderstood by some of the crowd.
15:39. The claims of Jesus to be the Son of God would have been well known, as well as the miracles he did, and the fact that the religious leaders wanted him crucified because they envied him. Thus it is not hard to believe that the centurion, upon seeing the love of the Christ (Father, forgive them, etc.), his bravery, and all the miracles and signs that accompanied his death, would be convinced that this man was in fact who he claimed to be, and indeed, who the sign over his head said he was.
16:9. When we look carefully at the last twelve verses of Mark (Mark 16:9-20), it seems certain that they are not part of the original God-breathed text, but were added to the original text of Mark. To do a complete study of the subject is tedious, and many of the arguments involve complex analysis of Greek grammar and syntax, which is best left to scholastic works that emphasize that kind of lexical and grammatical material.[5]

There are a number of reasons that the last twelve verses of Mark are not considered original by most textual scholars. For one thing, the Greek manuscripts have four major different endings to Mark (there are minor variations besides these). Obviously, not all four of them can be original, and there is solid evidence that the ending that is in most English Bibles today was a later addition to Mark. The noted textual scholar Bruce Metzger writes:

> The last twelve verses of the commonly received text of Mark [which appear as the last twelve verses in most English Bibles] are absent from the two oldest Greek manuscripts (א and B), from the Old Latin codex Bobiensis (it^k), the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written AD 897 and AD 913). Clement of Alexandria [c. 150-215 AD] and Origen [Origen Adamantius of Alexandria, Egypt; 184-253 AD] show no knowledge of the existence of these verses; furthermore Eusebius [263-339 AD] and Jerome [347-420 AD] attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them. The original form of the Eusebian sections (drawn up by Ammonius) makes no provision for numbering sections of the text after 16:8. Not a few manuscripts that contain the passage have scribal notes stating that older Greek copies lack it, and in other witnesses the passage is marked with asterisks or obeli, the conventional signs used by copyists to indicate a spurious addition to a document.[6]

Not only is the commonly known ending of Mark missing in many manuscripts, there is also internal evidence that these verses are not original. For example, the vocabulary and style in Greek are not consistent with the rest of Mark. That in and of

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[5] A few works that cover the ending of Mark in much more detail are: B. F. Wescott and F. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, reprinted from the 1882 edition), Appendix 1, pp. 29-51; Bratcher and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (United Bible Society, Leiden, 1961), pp. 506-522; Roger Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (German Bible Society, Stuttgart, Germany, 2006); William Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Mark* (William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1974).
[6] Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, USA, 1994), pp. 102, 103.

itself is good evidence that the ending of Mark was not original. More than that, however, the closing verses in Mark contain remarks that do not fit with the general tenor of the Bible. For example, although believers can be protected from harm by the power of God, the comment in Mark 16:18 about believers picking up snakes or drinking poison without being harmed does not flow with the rest of Scripture, and with the exception of a few miracles, is not the reality experienced by even very faithful believers. Furthermore, the comment in Mark 16:17 about speaking in tongues does not fit with the rest of Jesus' teaching, and it seems it would have only been confusing to the disciples, who knew nothing about it at that time. It seems certain that it was a later addition from the period of the early church, when speaking in tongues was better known.

Besides the above evidence, there are statements in the ending of Mark that contradict the other Gospels. For example, Mark 16:13 says that the two men who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus went back to Jerusalem and joined the rest of the disciples who, "did not believe them." This contradicts the Gospel of Luke, which is the Gospel that has the account of the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). In Luke, when the two men who have just seen Jesus arrive at Jerusalem, they find that the apostles and disciples were already convinced Jesus was alive and even saying that Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter, an appearance not specifically recorded in Scripture. Before the two men could even tell the apostles that they too had seen Jesus, the apostles and disciples were saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen" (Luke 24:34). Only after the two men were told that Jesus was alive did they get a chance to report their own experience with Jesus, confirming that Jesus was indeed alive. Thus Mark 16:13 and Luke 24:34, 35 blatantly contradict each other, and the best explanation for the contradiction is that Mark 16:13 is not original.

Similarly, Mark 16:14 seems to contradict the other Gospels, and is the only verse in which Jesus reproves his disciples when he first appears to them. This conflicts with Luke 24:36, which says that when Jesus appeared to the disciples he said, "Peace be with you." By the time Jesus appeared to the disciples who were behind closed doors, they were already saying he had been raised, so why would he reprove them? Reproof certainly does not seem to be the tone of Jesus' communication with the disciples according to Luke 24:36-49 and John 20:19-23. Again, the best explanation of the contradiction is that Mark 16:14 is not original.

Also, Mark 16:16, which is the only verse in the New Testament that says baptism is necessary for salvation, is evidence that this section is not original. There are no other verses in the New Testament that state or imply that a person must be baptized in water to be saved. God wants people to be saved so badly that He mentions how to be saved in many places in the New Testament, but this is the only place that says anything about being baptized in order to be saved. Which is more likely, that God would only mention baptism as a requirement for salvation in this one verse and leave it out everywhere else, or that this verse is an addition? Especially in light of all the other evidence that the closing verses of Mark were added to the original text, this verse can be seen to be an addition. We must also remember that as the Church developed in the decades after Pentecost, there was a growing tendency towards ritual and sacrament, including the teaching that water baptism was necessary for salvation. Thus, it makes sense that the person who added this verse to Mark thought that baptism was necessary for salvation,

and so put that in his addition, just like the unusual material about picking up snakes, drinking poison, and speaking in tongues.

16:14. This verse seems to contradict Luke 24:34, because when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, they were already saying he had been raised, so why would he reprove them? Reproof certainly does not seem to be the tone of Jesus' communication with the disciples according to Luke 24:36-49 and John 20:19-23. The best explanation is that the closing section of Mark is not original. See commentary on verse 9.

16:16. Mark 16:16 is the only verse in the New Testament that says a person has to be baptized to be saved. Salvation is the most serious subject in the Bible, and thus this verse requires our attention. However, studying it in light of the scope of the New Testament, it seems unreaonable that water baptism is necessary for salvation, but it is only mentioned here and not in any of the other clear verses about salvation. For example, Romans 10:9 says very clearly: "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." That fact, along with all the evidence that the closing section of Mark is not original, is very solid evidence that this verse is not original, but was added, and that makes sense becasue as Christianity developed in the decades after Christ's ascension, the doctrine that water baptism was necessary for salvation became a part of Church doctrine, even though it had never been a doctrine before then.

If someone did want to insist that Mark 16:16 is original and a person had to be "baptized" to be saved, then the "baptism" in the verse would not refer to baptism in water but to baptism in holy spirit. In that case, the statement "Whoever believes and is baptized [in holy spirit] will be saved" would be true, because at the time a person believes, he is baptized in holy spirit, and then his salvation is assured. See commentary on 16:9.

16:17. This verse was almost certainly added to Mark from a later time when speaking in tongues was better known and understood (see commentary on 16:9).

"speak with new tongues." For an explanation of speaking in tongues see commentary on 1 Cor. 14:5.