The Gospel According to
MARK

1 [1]A beginning[1] of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God![2]

John the Baptizer

[2]As it is written in the prophets:[3] "Take note, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."[4] [3]"A voice calling out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight!'"[5] [4]John started baptizing in the wilderness[6] and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.[7] [5]Well, the whole Judean countryside and the Jerusalemites started going out to him, and were all being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

[6]Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist; and he was eating locusts and wild honey.[8] [7]And he was proclaiming: "After me my Superior is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loosen.[9] [8]I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with Holy Spirit."[10]

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[1] There is no definite article with 'beginning'; and of course the other three Gospels have different 'beginnings'.

[2] There is no definite article with 'Son', which in this case emphasizes the inherent quality of the noun.

[3] Around 3.3% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Isaiah the prophet' instead of 'the prophets' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 96.7% are correct. The first quote is from Malachi.

[4] See Malachi 3:1.

[5] See Isaiah 40:3. My rendering follows that of the translation of the Jewish Publication Society, which reflects normal Hebrew parallelism. Both Hebrew poetry and prose make constant use of parallel or synonymous expressions. Looking at the context in Isaiah, it seems clear that 'in the wilderness' modifies the verb 'to prepare', and not 'to call out'. But what is the point of a straight road in the wilderness? Any highway facilitates the transportation of people and cargo, but a straight highway cutting through a stretch of accidented terrain is especially useful. (Indeed, Isaiah 40:3-4 appears to be describing the construction of a modern superhighway.) John was the voice, but it was the people who had to build the road. So how about us? Are we supposed to be preparing a similar highway? If so, how? At the very least, we should be proclaiming biblical values to world, using all available means.

[6] He was 'preparing the way of the Lord', and doing so in the wilderness.

[7] There are those who squirm at the plain meaning of the Text—John was offering forgiveness of sins. Well, throughout the Old Testament, if you brought an animal offering you were confessing to being a sinner, and expecting to be forgiven. As forerunner to the Lamb of God, who would provide the ultimate payment for sin, John represented a transition, from the old to the new.

[8] Honey is an excellent food; his locusts were probably considerably larger than our grasshoppers.

[9] Matthew has, "whose sandals I am not worthy to carry". John doubtless repeated this many times, to different audiences, and varied the expression. There is no discrepancy.

[10] In John 1:33 it is God Himself who says that Jesus will baptize with Holy Spirit. There is no definite article with Holy Spirit, so I take it that we should consider the phrase as a proper name. Two baptisms are here contrasted: 1) John the agent with water as the

Jesus is baptized

9Well it happened in those days that Jesus came from Natsareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And immediately upon coming up from[1] the water He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon Him. 11And a **Voice** came from the heavens: "You are my Son, the beloved,[2] in whom I am well pleased!"[3]

Jesus is tested

12Immediately the Spirit impelled Him into the wilderness.[4] 13And He was there in the wilderness forty days being tested[5] by Satan, and was with the wild animals;[6] and the angels were ministering to Him.[7]

Jesus ministers in Galilee

14Now after John was put in prison,[8] Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom[9] of God, 15and saying: "The time has been fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has approached. Repent and

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vehicle; 2) Jesus the agent with the Holy Spirit as the vehicle. A baptism where the Holy Spirit is the agent is distinct from these—for a more complete discussion, please see 'Baptisms in the Bible' , in my website: www.prunch.org. But how and when does Jesus baptize us with the Holy Spirit? He does so from His position at the Father's right hand, when we believe into Him. From then on the Spirit indwells us, and is closely associated with our 'new man'.

1 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have 'out of' instead of 'from' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

2 Here and in Luke 3:22 the episode is presented from Jesus' perspective, while in Matthew 3:17 it is presented from John's perspective. When the Holy Spirit 'fell' on the day of Pentecost, each foreigner heard the message in his own dialect. The situation here was similar: Jesus heard one thing and John another. For further discussion please see "'This is' or 'You are'" on my website.

3 Here we have the three persons of the Godhead clearly represented: the Father by the Voice, the Holy Spirit by the dove, and Jesus was the Son. This was doubtless an important affirmation for Jesus.

4 This episode was ordained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to face Satan when He was the weakest physically that He would ever be (after 40 days without food!). When Satan failed in his attempt to defeat this weakened Jesus, he must have been filled with despair—he then knew that he could never defeat Him. (But he would still try to kill Him.)

5 Our 'test' and 'tempt' are translations of a single Greek word, the context determining the choice. To tempt is to test in the area of morals. In this context I consider that 'tempt' is too limited, but it is included in the wider meaning of 'test'. Note that the Spirit impelled Him, which means that this was a necessary part of the Plan. The three specific tests recorded by Matthew and Luke presumably happened near the end of the forty days.

6 The Creator had nothing to fear from the animals.

7 The parallel passage in Matthew 4:11 gives the impression that the angels waited until the devil left. In that event, Jesus bested Satan without angelic help.

8 This was probably around a year after His baptism, during the second half of 27 AD.

9 Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'of the Kingdom' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

believe in the Gospel."[1]

Peter, Andrew, James, John

16Then, as He was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother, of Simon,[2] casting a circular net onto the water,[3] for they were fishermen. **17**So Jesus said to them: "Come, follow me and I will turn you into fishers of men."[4] **18**At once they left their nets[5] and followed Him. **19**And going on from there a little ways He saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John; they were in their boat mending their nets. **20**Right away He called them, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men they followed Him.

A demonized man

21Then they went into Capernaum.[6] The very next Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. **22**And they kept on being amazed at His teaching, because He was teaching them as one having authority, and not like the scribes.[7]

23Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, **24**saying: "Hey, what do you want with us, Jesus Natsarene?![8] Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the

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1 John, His herald, is in prison—his ministry and function have ended. So Jesus takes up John's message and continues with it. The first round of His ministry in Judea, as recorded in John 1, 2 and 3, ended here.

2 Some 90% of the Greek manuscripts have 'his brother, of Simon'—presumably a reference to their father. If Peter was the eldest son, he would have been named for his father.

3 Fishing with a circular net is very common here in Brazil. You have to throw it with a circular motion so it spreads out and lands on the water as a full circle. The lead weights around the edges then start sinking and hopefully some fish will be caught in the middle.

4 They had already spent time with Jesus—at the wedding in Cana, in Judea, in Samaria—so their reaction is not surprising.

5 They had an assortment. They probably also had hired men (verse 20), so their equipment would be cared for.

6 By this time Jesus had been rejected in Natsareth (Luke 4:16-30) and had moved to Capernaum, which became His base of operations (Luke 4:31-32).

7 Presumably the scribes would cite 'authorities' for more than one position, and leave the conclusion up in the air—but not Jesus.

8 The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants נצר (*resh, tsadde, nun*), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means 'branch'. Greek has the equivalent for 'ps' and 'ks', but not for 'ts', so the transliteration used a ζ (*zeta*) 'dz', which is the voiced counterpart of 'ts'. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as 'z'! But Hebrew has a 'z', ז (*zayin*), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants נזר, replacing the correct *tsadde* with *zayin*. Neither 'Nazareth' nor 'Nazarene', spelled with a *zayin*, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, *netser*—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, *tsemach*—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew (2:23) is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the 'Branch-man', from 'Branch-town'. Which brings us to the word 'natsorean'. The familiar 'Nazarene' (*Ναζαρηνος*) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24,

Holy One of God!" 25So Jesus rebuked him saying: "Shut up and get out of him!"[1] 26The unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.[2] 27And all were astounded, so that they questioned among themselves, saying: "What is this? What can this new doctrine be?[3] Because with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him!" 28So His fame spread directly into the whole surrounding area of Galilee.

Peter's mother-in-law

29Immediately upon exiting the synagogue they went into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever,[4] so without delay they told Him about her. 31So He went and grasping her hand lifted her up; immediately the fever left her and she began to serve them.[5]

Many healings

32That evening, when the sun had set, they started bringing to Him all who were sick and the demonized. 33So much so that the whole town was gathered at the door, 34and He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew He was Messiah.[6]

Alone to pray

35Now very early, still night, He got up, slipped out, and went off to a solitary place, where He was praying. 36Simon and those with him hunted for Him, 37and upon finding Him they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38But He said to them: "Let us go to the neighboring

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14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is 'Natsorean' (*Ναζωραιος*), which is quite different. I have been given to understand that the Natsareth of Jesus' day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family, who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. "Can anything good …?"

[1] The demon had no business piping up, and he did so without due respect, so the Lord did not waste any kind words on him. Since the speaker said 'us', there may have been more than one.

[2] Demons like to put on a show; personally, I like to deprive them of that 'pleasure' by forbidding any manifestation at the outset.

[3] Instead of 'what can this new doctrine be', perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'a new doctrine' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

[4] The parallel passage in Luke 4:37 specifies that it was a high fever—she was burning. The case mentioned in Matthew 8:14-15 is probably different, happening some time later. For a fuller discussion please see 'Peter's mother-in-law' on my website: www.prunch.org.

[5] A high fever usually leaves a person weak, even after it passes, so we really have a double miracle here: Jesus dismissed the fever, but also reversed its effect.

[6] I here follow some 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission; most versions omit "He was Messiah".

towns, so I can preach there also; that is why I have come."[1] 39He was constantly preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and also casting out demons.[2]

The hinge—proof, evaluation, rejection, blasphemy

A leper—the proof

40A leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling before Him and saying to Him, "If you want to, you are able to cleanse me." 41So being moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him,[3] and said to him: "I want to; be cleansed!" 42And when He said this, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. 43And He sent him away at once, sternly warning him, 44by saying: "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."[4] 45However he went out and began to proclaim it freely, spreading the news,[5] so that He was no longer able to enter a town openly, but remained outside in deserted places; yet they kept coming to Him from all over.[6]

A paralytic—the evaluation

2 1Well a few days later, He again entered Capernaum, and it was heard that He was at home. 2Without delay so many were gathered together that there was no more room, not even around the door, and He was speaking the Word to them. 3Then four men came, carrying a paralytic to Him. 4And not being able to get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof where He was;[7] upon breaking through they lowered the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5So seeing their faith Jesus says to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

6Now some of the scribes were sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts: 7"Why does this guy speak blasphemies like that? Who can

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[1] I here follow some 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission; most versions have 'come forth', presumably referring to why He had slipped out of town (which doesn't make very good sense).

[2] Was Galilee infested with demons? Beginning with Abraham, God declared a special interest in that area, so it is predictable that Satan would also devote special attention to it.

[3] Wow! In those days, no one would touch a leper, because of contamination. Notice that Jesus agreed with the leper: "I want to; be cleansed!" Beautiful!

[4] A 'testimony' that the Messiah was present—who else could heal leprosy? This would be the first case the priest had ever had of evaluating a cleansed leper, because only the Messiah could cure leprosy. By instructing the cleansed leper in this way, Jesus was serving notice to the priests that the Messiah had come.

[5] But he did go to the priest, which resulted in the following evaluation—Luke makes this point clearly in his parallel account. That said, however, I can sympathize with that leper—he had good reason to sound off! But it did increase the pressure on Jesus.

[6] There were an awful lot of sick people who all of a sudden had hope.

[7] The roof was presumably flat, with an outside staircase leading up to it. I suppose damaging someone else's roof could be considered a crime, but they were determined. If Jesus was in His own house, there would be no problem.

forgive sins but God alone?" [8]Immediately Jesus perceived in His spirit what they were reasoning within themselves[1] and said to them: "Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? [9]Which is easier:[2] to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins have been forgiven', or to say, 'Get up, pick up your pallet and start walking!'? [10]But so that you may know that the Son of the Man[3] has authority on the earth to forgive sins"—He says to the paralytic: [11]"To you I say, get up, pick up your pallet and go to your house!" [12]So forthwith he got up, picked up his pallet and went out in front of them all; so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"[4]

Matthew called

[13]Then He went out again by the sea; and the whole crowd came to Him, and He began to teach them. [14]As He passed by,[5] He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow me!" So he got up and followed Him.

[15]Now it happened, as He was reclining at the table in his house,[6] that many tax collectors and sinners[7] joined Jesus and His disciples at the table; for there were many and they followed Him. [16]The scribes and the Pharisees, seeing Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, said to His disciples, "Why is it that He is eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners?" [17]Upon hearing it Jesus said to them: "It is not the healthy who have need of a doctor, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."[8]

Fasting

[18]Now John's disciples and those of the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and those of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?" [19]So Jesus said to them: "Can

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[1] Time and again the Inspired Record will point out that Jesus could read people's thoughts.

[2] I suppose the point to be that the first is easier to **say**, because no one can see whether it happened or not. But if you tell a paralytic to get up and he doesn't, you get egg on the face. The Lord did it that way to help them believe that He could really forgive sin. There was nothing wrong with the scribes' inference; indeed only God can forgive sin, so in fact Jesus was claiming to be God!

[3] That is what the Text says, "the Son of the Man", which appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself. The phrase does not make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if "the man" refers to pristine Adam and "the son" to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

[4] Quite right; they never had!

[5] Presumably this happened as He headed out toward the sea.

[6] Luke 5:28 says explicitly that it was Levi's house. He evidently put on a big dinner and invited all his associates.

[7] 'Tax collectors and sinners' seems to have been almost a frozen idiom. A Jew who collected taxes for Rome was viewed as a traitor and held in very low esteem.

[8] Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'to repentance', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

the groomsmen fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom to themselves they cannot fast. 20But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast, in those days.[1]

Cloth and wineskins

21"Further, no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, or else the new tears away some of the old, and a worse hole results. 22And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine spills out and the skins will be ruined; rather, new wine must be put into new wineskins."[2]

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath[3]

23Now it happened, on a Sabbath, that He was passing through some grain fields, and His disciples began to make a path, picking the heads of grain. 24So the Pharisees said to Him, "Just look, why are they doing on a Sabbath that which is not permitted?" 25And He said to them: "Did you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him? 26How he entered the house of God (making Abiathar high priest)[4] and ate the consecrated bread, which only priests were permitted to eat, and shared it with those who were with him?" 27Then He said to them: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.[5] 28Therefore[6] the Son of the Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."[7]

A Sabbath healing—the rejection

3 1Another time He went into the synagogue, and there was a man there with a withered hand. 2So they watched Him closely, whether

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1 Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts read 'day' instead of 'days' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.), but presumably the fasting would take place on more than one day.

2 There is no way of renewing an old wineskin. Whenever a church becomes an 'old wineskin', any introduction of new wine will always cause a split. Anyone who wants to obey the Holy Spirit will probably not be welcome in such a church. To be with Jesus it is often necessary to go 'outside the camp' (Hebrews 13:13). But what can a person, or a community, do to avoid becoming an 'old wineskin'? I would say that it is necessary to always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and always be prepared to obey Him.

3 Between verses 22 and 23 all of John chapter 5 takes place—that chapter revolves around the second Passover of His public ministry, in 28 A.D. A year and a half have passed since His baptism.

4 My rendering is rather different than the 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest' of the AV. We are translating three Greek words that very literally would be 'upon Abiathar high priest'. As a direct result of David's visit, Abiathar became high priest. For a complete discussion please see: Abiathar is not Ahimelech on my website: www.prunch.org.

5 This is a crucial point. The Pharisees, etc., had turned the Sabbath into an instrument of domination that they used to impose their authority on the people.

6 Why "therefore"? If the Sabbath was made for man, it would be up to him to decide what to do with it. But as the second, and last, Adam, Jesus was above the Sabbath.

7 The Lord of the Sabbath can change the rules, or even retire it! Jesus' claim was totally unacceptable to the Pharisees; He was depriving them of their favorite instrument.

He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3Well, He says to the man with the withered hand, "Come out in the middle!" 4Then He says to them: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5After looking around at them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts,[1] He says to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" So he stretched, and his hand was restored as healthy as the other![2] 6Then the Pharisees went straight out, and with the Herodians[3] started hatching a plot against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Healings by the sea

7Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea; and a large crowd from Galilee followed Him—also from Judea, 8from Jerusalem, from Idumea and beyond Jordan; even those around Tyre and Sidon. A huge crowd came to Him, having heard the sorts of things He kept doing. 9So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the crowd, lest they should press in on Him. 10Because He had healed many, so that as many as had afflictions were pushing toward Him so as to touch Him. 11And the unclean spirits—whenever one saw Him, he would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, "You are the son of God!" 12And He kept giving them strict orders that they should not make Him known.[4]

The Twelve chosen

13He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He wanted, and they came to Him. 14He appointed twelve,[5] that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach—15also to have authority to heal sicknesses and[6] to cast out demons: 16namely Peter (a name He gave to Simon); 17James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (and a name He gave to them was *Boanerges*, that is, 'Sons of thunder'); 18Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

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[1] They had no compassion, no *agape*; their only concern was to preserve their system, their position and authority.

[2] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'as healthy as the other', as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[3] Pharisees and Herodians were political opponents, so this was a strange alliance; evidently they perceived Jesus as a common enemy; such a serious enemy that He needed destroying.

[4] I wonder why the demons felt compelled to proclaim who Jesus was, evidently. I would say that He generally has the opposite problem with us!

[5] Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, add 'whom He also named apostles', presumably imported from Luke 6:13, to be followed by NIV, LB, TEV, etc.

[6] Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'to heal diseases and', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

20Then they went into a house;[1] and again a multitude gathered, so that they were not even able to eat bread. 21Well upon hearing this His family came to apprehend Him, because they were saying, "He is out of his mind!"[2]

Scribes blaspheme the Holy Spirit

22Then some scribes who had come down from Jerusalem[3] started saying, "He has Beelzebul,"[4] and "It is by the ruler of the demons that he casts out demons." 23So summoning them He started communicating to them with illustrations: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25And if a household is divided against itself, that household cannot stand. 26And if Satan has risen up against himself and become divided, he cannot stand, but is finished. 27No one can plunder the strong man's goods,[5] invading his house, unless he first binds the strong man—then he may plunder the house.

28"Assuredly I say to you: all the sins of the sons of men can be forgiven, including whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"[6]—30because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."[7]

Jesus goes on the offensive

New relationships

31Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32A crowd was sitting around Him; so they said to Him, "Look, your mother and your brothers and your sisters[8] are outside asking for you." 33He answered them saying, "Who is my

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1 This may well have been His own house in Capernaum. If He were in someone else's house, the hosts could have protected Him so He could at least eat.

2 Go down to verse 31 for more about this.

3 They had come all the way to Galilee, just to combat Jesus.

4 All Greek manuscripts have 'Beelzebul', rather than the familiar 'Beelzebub', that is a carry-over from the Latin.

5 Since the definite article occurs with 'strong man' the first time the phrase occurs, the entity has already been introduced, so the reference is to Satan. Here is a biblical basis for binding Satan, which is now possible because of Christ's victory. Hebrews 2:14 informs us that Jehovah the Son took on human form to destroy the devil, while 1 John 3:8 affirms that He was manifested to undo the works of the devil. But in John 20:21 the resurrected Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you", and not long after that He returned to the Father. He defeated Satan alright, but it is up to us to 'undo the works'.

6 Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read 'sin' instead of 'condemnation', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

7 Those scribes committed the unpardonable sin. They said that the Holy Spirit was Satan; that His work was Satan's. Are there not those in our day who have done the same thing?

8 The reference to 'sisters' makes clear that the 'brothers' were indeed Mary's sons. Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'and your sisters' (as in TR, AV, NKJV).

mother or my brothers?" 34And looking around at those seated in a circle around Him He said: "Behold my mother and my brothers! 35Because whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, my mother."[1]

Many parables

4 1Once again He began to teach beside the sea. And a large crowd was gathered to Him, so that He got into the boat and sat down, out on the water, while the whole crowd was on the land, at the water's edge. 2Then He began teaching them many things by parables and said to them in His teaching:

Parable of the soils

3"Listen! Yes, a sower went out to sow. 4And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell along the path, and the birds[2] came and devoured it. 5Some fell on the rocky area where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly because it had no depth of soil. 6But upon the sun's rising it was scorched, and because it had no root it was withered up. 7And some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and smothered it, and it yielded no fruit. 8And some fell into the good ground, and coming up and growing it started to produce fruit—yielding thirty times as much, sixty times as much, even a hundred times as much." 9Then He said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

The why of parables

10But when He was alone, those who were around Him, with the twelve,[3] asked Him about the parable. 11So He said to them: "To you it has been given to know[4] the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, everything is being given in parables, 12so that: 'Seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; so that they should not return and their sins be forgiven them.'"[5]

'The soils' explained

13Then He said to them: "Don't you understand this parable? How then

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[1] The claims of Christ's Kingdom are more important than the claims of one's family. Of course, if a true disciple's family does not share his commitment, they are not going to like it.

[2] The AV and NKJV add 'of the air', following the TR and perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts.

[3] Evidently there were some regular followers beyond the twelve. In fact, later on He would send out seventy, two by two (Luke 10:1).

[4] Perhaps 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "to know" (as in most modern versions). The omission changes the meaning and should be rejected.

[5] See Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus only started using parables after He had been rejected by the religious leaders. As Jesus clearly states, He started using parables so the people would <u>not</u> understand. (Any claim that Jesus was a 'great teacher' based on His use of parables is just hot air.) If parables are not to be understood, then no doctrine should ever be based on one—but if the Lord interpreted it, the interpretation may be used. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "their sins" (to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

will you understand all the parables? 14The sower sows the Word. 15These are the ones where the Word is sown along the path: as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.[1] 16Similarly, these are the ones sown on the rocky area: as soon as they hear the Word they receive it with joy, 17but since they have no root in themselves they are temporary—when oppression or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away.[2] 18And these are the ones sown among the thorns: they hear the Word, 19but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the undue desires for other things come in and smother the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20And these are the ones sown on the good ground: such people hear the Word, welcome it and produce fruit—thirty times as much, sixty times as

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[1] This statement is really a continuation of that given in Mark 3:27. The Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan's goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of "no one" it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those 'goods' be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the 'goods' are people who are subject to Satan's power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan's power over a person so that he or she can be saved! But what does Satan do to people that makes it necessary to "bind" him?

We find the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Let us begin with verse 3: "If our gospel is veiled it is veiled to them who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine in them." The Text clearly states that Satan, 'the god of this age', is in the business of blinding the minds of unbelievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth, the most terrible truth in the world, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he has the power or ability to invade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning.

Sovereign Jesus declared this truth when He explained the parable of the sower. "These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the Word that was planted in their hearts" (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: "lest they believe and be saved". Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and "takes away" that Word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it. Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read 'them', instead of 'their hearts' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] Note that with both the stones and the thorns, the seed did germinate; there was life.

much, even a hundred times as much."[1]

The candlestick

21Also He said to them: "The lamp is not brought to be put under a box[2] or under a bed, is it? Is it not to be placed on its stand? 22For there is no 'hidden' that may not be exposed, nor has anything been concealed but that it should come to light. 23If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 24Then He said to them: "Pay attention to what you hear. With the same measure you use it will be measured to you in return; and to you who hear,[3] more will be added. 25Because whoever has, to him more will be given; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."[4]

Spontaneous growth

26He also said: "The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter the seed on the ground 27and should sleep and get up night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28All by itself the earth produces fruit: first a shoot, then a head of grain, then full grain in the head. 29But as soon as the grain is ready, he sends in the sickle, because the harvest has come."[5]

The mustard seed

30Again He said: "To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God, or with what sort of parable should we illustrate it? 31It is like a mustard seed, that when it is sown on the ground is the smallest of all such seeds,[6] 32yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden herbs and produces big branches, so that the birds of the air are able to rest in its shade."[7]

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1 I link verse 20 to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. Christians who do not live so as to contribute to God's Kingdom are really building their lives with hay and straw—many will not save even 30% of their lives. See 'Fire loves straw' on my website: www.prunch.org.

2 The reference is to a peck measure, whether a box or a basket (or a basin).

3 Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'to you who hear', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. The phrase is relevant to verse 25.

4 To stand still spiritually is not an available option. Either we grow, or we lose. Spiritual growth is like riding up an incline on a bicycle with no brakes—if you stop pedaling, you go backwards. 'The same measure' includes effort; 'hearing' implies doing something about it.

5 We do not have to understand how God works; we just have to do our part, and the harvest will come.

6 The rendering 'the smallest seed in the world/earth' is unfortunate and misleading. The Text has 'of those on the ground', repeating the phrase above it, only eliding the verb. The Lord was not making a global botanical statement, as the next verse makes clear—He was referring to vegetables planted in a garden in His day and in that area, and of such herbs mustard had the smallest seed. To object that tobacco and orchid seeds are smaller is beside the point. See 'The smallest seed' on my website: www.prunch.org.

7 The verb I have rendered 'to rest' is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. The Text says that the birds can use the <u>shade</u>, not the branches.

33It was with many such parables that He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34But apart from a parable He did not speak to them; privately, however, He would explain everything to His disciples.

A supernatural tempest

35On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36Since He was already in the boat,[1] they took off with Him, leaving the crowd behind (other little boats were also with Him).[2] 37Well a strong cyclonic wind came up, such that the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling up. 38But He was on the poop deck, sleeping on the cushion;[3] so they awakened Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?"[4] 39Then, having been awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Shut up; be muzzled!" So the wind stopped and there was a complete calm.[5] 40And He said to them: "Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?"[6] 41They were terrified and started saying to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!?"[7]

The 'legion'

5 1Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gadarenes.[8] 2And when He got out of the boat, right away a man with

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But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says 'under its shade')?

1 Going back to 4:1, He was already in the boat. I would say that the explanations recorded in 4:10-20 actually happened later.

2 I do not know why Mark mentions the other boats—maybe some of the crowd had come in them. In any case, they evidently did not follow Him across the lake (they may have been dangerously small to attempt it).

3 In keeping with the size of the boat, the poop deck was probably just big enough for someone to lie down on it. Jesus was not down in the boat or He would already be covered with water. He was so worn out that not even the storm aroused Him—they probably had to shake Him.

4 There were professional fishermen in that boat, who had seen no end of storms on that lake, but this one was unusual. Satan saw where Jesus was heading and did not want to lose his prize victim, so he made a valiant effort to stop Him.

5 Jesus performed a double miracle here. First, He made the wind stop short. But once water is agitated, it takes a while to calm down, even if the cause is gone, so second, He smoothed out the water immediately.

6 Jesus is evidently saying that they should not have been afraid, and that they themselves could have solved the problem—if they had the faith. I imagine that the Lord would say something similar to us, when we fail to respond appropriately to difficult circumstances that take us by surprise.

7 Well really, what were the options?—human being, angelic being (good or bad), God. Who can turn water into wine, cleanse lepers, raise dead, feed 5,000 with five loaves, etc.?

8 A very small handful (0.3%; 5 manuscripts out of some 1,700) of objectively inferior Greek manuscripts have 'Gerasenes' instead of 'Gadarenes' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Gadara being the Roman capital of the province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee, 'the region of the Gadarenes' is a perfectly reasonable description of the site, especially since Mark was writing for a Roman audience. For a

an unclean spirit met Him, coming from the tombs.—3He had his dwelling among the tombs. No one could bind him, not even with chains, 4because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, only to have had the chains torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; no one had been strong enough to tame him. 5Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones.[1]—6When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and kneeled down to Him,[2] 7and with a loud cry he said: "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most-High God? I implore you by God,[3] don't torment me!" 8Because He was saying to him, "You unclean spirit, come out of the man!" 9Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "Legion[4] is my name, because we are many." 10He started begging Him repeatedly that He would not send them out of that region.[5] 11Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. 12So all the demons[6] begged Him saying, "Send us into the pigs, so that we may enter them." 13And forthwith Jesus gave them permission; and coming out the unclean spirits went into the pigs (there were about two thousand); but the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and they were drowned by the sea.[7]

14So those who were tending the pigs ran off and reported it in the town and the country-side. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. 15They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demonized, who had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right

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more detailed discussion, please see: The 'Legion' and the pigs; where was it? on my website: www.prunch.org

1 Here in Brazil, where Spiritism and Satanism are out in the open, this sort of thing is well known. The demons 'heal' the victims so they don't become incapacitated.

2 I find this to be curious: this was an unusually powerful demon, yet he kneeled to Jesus, whereas many lesser ones evidently did not (although they all knew who Jesus really was).

3 Now really, a demon appealing to God! Since he had recognized, correctly, that Jesus was 'Son of the Most-High God', he was appealing to Him through His Father—pretty shrewd! (I assume that he had been informed that the attempt to destroy Jesus with the storm had failed.)

4 A full Roman legion was 6,000 men, but many legions had only half that many. On the basis of verse 12, one wonders if there could have been 2,000 demons. This being the only recorded instance where Jesus asked a demon's name, I wonder why He did. Since He presumably already knew, I take it that He did it so we would have a record of demonic infestation. I see no basis here for needing to know a demon's name before you can cast it out.

5 Demons are territorial. (See also Daniel 10.) The parallel passage in Luke records that they also begged not to be sent to the Abyss.

6 Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'all the demons', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. (except that some supply 'the demons', but not 'all').

7 For the demons to destroy the herd would be self-defeating; I take it that the pigs preferred death to demons (animals often show better sense than people do). Since the Law forbad eating pork, presumably Jesus was not particularly disturbed (and I suppose it is possible that He Himself stampeded the pigs).

mind; and they were afraid. **16**Those who had seen it related to them how it happened to the demonized man, and about the pigs. **17**Then they began to implore Him to depart from their borders.[1]

18Well upon His getting into the boat, the man who had been demonized started begging Him that he might be with Him. **19**But Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your family and report to them how much the Lord[2] has done for you; and He had mercy on you." **20**So he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all were marveling. **21**Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered to Him; and He was by the sea.

A hemorrhage and a dead girl

22And then, one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, comes, and upon seeing Him he falls at His feet **23**and pleads earnestly with Him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; do come and lay your hands on her[3] so that she may be saved, and she will live." **24**So He went with him. A large crowd was also following Him, and they were pressing around Him.

The hemorrhage

25Now a certain woman—who had been bleeding for twelve years, **26**and had suffered many things under many doctors, and had spent all that she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse—**27**when she heard about Jesus, she came from behind in the crowd and touched His garment. **28**(She had kept saying, "If I can just touch His clothes, I will be healed.")[4] **29**Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she knew in her body that she was healed from the affliction. **30**And instantly Jesus perceived within Himself that some power had gone out of Him, and turning around in the crowd He said, "Who touched my clothes?" **31**So His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, yet you say, 'Who touched me?'?" **32**But He kept looking around to see who had done it. **33**So the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the

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[1] So far as we know, Jesus never went back there. The loss of the pigs was a hard blow to the local economy, so Jesus was obviously a 'dangerous' person to have around. The pigs were more important to them than the man.

[2] Note that the Text has 'the Lord', not 'God'—since Jesus presumably was speaking Hebrew, He probably used God's personal name, Jehovah, to give that translation. In verse 20 the man credits 'Jesus'.

[3] This sort of thing happened more than once; the Jews evidently believed that His physical presence was necessary.

[4] The street was packed with people; the crowd was on both sides of Jesus, as well as behind. So she had to push her way forward, and no doubt got plenty of dirty looks, and maybe a few elbows—it would have been easy to give up, but she kept repeating her expectation to herself to keep up her courage (and she was desperate). For a fuller discussion, please see 'A desperate woman' on my website: www.prunch.org.

whole truth.[1] 34And He said to her: "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go into peace[2] and be healed from your affliction."

The dead girl

35While He was still speaking, they came from the synagogue ruler's house saying: "Your daughter died. Why trouble the teacher further?"[3] 36But immediately upon hearing the spoken message Jesus said to the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe!" 37He allowed no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.[4] 38Then He came to the synagogue ruler's house and found a commotion—weeping and loud wailing. 39So upon entering He said to them: "Why are you making such a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but is asleep." 40But they started ridiculing Him.[5] After He put them all out, He took the child's father and mother, and those with Him,[6] and went in where the child was lying. 41And taking the child by the hand He said to her, "*Talitha koumi*," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" 42Immediately the girl got up and started walking around (she was twelve years old). And they were overcome with great amazement. 43He gave them strict orders that no one should know about it, and said to give her something to eat.[7]

A visit to Natsareth

6 1Then He went out from there and came to His hometown,[8] and His disciples followed Him. 2And when the Sabbath came He began to teach in the synagogue. And many who heard were astonished, saying: "Where did this man get these things?" and "What wisdom is this that is given to him?" and "Such mighty works are being performed by his hands! 3Isn't this the carpenter,[9] the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?"[10] So they took offense at Him. 4But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without

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1 That was not easy, in front of the crowd.

2 That is what the Text says, 'into' not 'in'. To go in peace is to leave on good terms, no hard feelings. But what might going <u>into</u> peace be? I would say that you take the peace with you; you live within an atmosphere of peace. Now that is a proper 'blessing'! (But only Jesus could give it.)

3 Healing is one thing, raising the dead is another!

4 At this point He told the crowd to stop, so He could proceed at a brisk pace, accompanied only by the three disciples and the father (the messengers doubtless followed).

5 They knew that she was dead, as indeed she was.

6 Peter was there, and he helped Mark write this Gospel.

7 Nothing like being practical! It had doubtless been a while since the last decent meal. Given the crowd that was there, it would be impossible to hide what had happened.

8 It had probably been over a year since they tried to kill Him (Luke 4:28-30), and He now had a significant 'bodyguard'.

9 They call Jesus '<u>the</u> carpenter', so Joseph had died.

10 I separated the statements since they probably came from different people. Four brothers are named, and 'sisters' is plural, so there were at <u>least</u> two of them (Matthew 13:56 has "all his sisters", so there were probably more than two). After Jesus, Joseph and Mary had a full family.

honor, except in his hometown, among his relatives, even in his own house."[1] **5**He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. **6**And He marveled at their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

The Twelve commissioned and sent

7Then He summoned the twelve and began to send them out, two by two, giving them authority over the unclean spirits as He did so. **8**And He commanded them to take nothing for the road, except just a staff—no knapsack, no bread, no coin in the belt—**9**but to wear sandals, and not put on two tunics. **10**And He said[2] to them: "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from that place.[3] **11**And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, as you depart from there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them.[4] Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city."[5] **12**So they went out and started preaching that people should repent, **13**and they were casting out many demons, and anointing with oil and healing many who were sick.

Herod had executed John the Baptizer

14Now King Herod heard *of Him*, because His name had become well known, and he said, "John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead, and that is why the powers[6] are at work in him." **15**Others said, "He is Elijah." Still others said, "He is a prophet like one of the prophets." **16**But when Herod heard, he said: "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!"[7]

17You see, Herod himself had ordered John arrested, and bound him in prison, on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her—**18**John had kept saying to Herod, "It isn't lawful for you to have your brother's wife."[8] **19**So Herodias nursed a grudge against him and wanted to kill him;[9] but she couldn't, **20**because Herod feared

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1 In fact, His brothers did not believe in Him until after His resurrection (John 7:3-5).

2 The verb is imperfect, so maybe He repeated this to each pair.

3 Jesus was obliging the disciples to be dependent on others for food and lodging, since they were not to take money—if no one fed them, they would go hungry; if no one took them in, they would have to sleep under a tree. How many of us would follow such instructions?

4 Note that this is a command. Paul did this at least once (Acts 13:51), and the Lord Jesus Himself gave the example (Matthew 11:23-24), except that He spoke the curse. (I have had occasion to do it, and the consequences were serious.)

5 Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last sentence of verse 11, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

6 Just what he meant by 'the powers', we do not know. His view of the supernatural was probably not strictly biblical.

7 Do you suppose Herod had a guilty conscience?

8 A coward John was not.

9 I suppose that Herodias was ambitious and figured that Herod offered more than did Phillip, so it was probably she who took the initiative; but she hadn't counted on John being a persistent and vocal 'conscience'.

John and protected him, knowing him to be a just and holy man. And consulting him he would do many things;[1] indeed, he would hear him with pleasure.

21Then an opportune day came[2] when on his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his courtiers, the military commanders, and the chief men of Galilee. **22**When the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those reclining with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." **23**He even swore to her, "Whatever you may ask me I will give you, up to half of my kingdom!"[3]

24So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptizer!" **25**Hurrying in directly to the king she requested, saying, "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptizer on a platter!" **26**Though the king became very sorry, because of his oaths and of his guests he did not want to refuse her. **27**Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded the head to be brought. So he went and beheaded him in the prison, **28**brought the head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.[4] **29**Upon hearing of it, his disciples came, removed the corpse and placed it in a tomb.[5]

The Twelve return

30Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and reported all to Him, both what they had done and what they had taught. **31**Because so many were coming and going that they did not even have leisure to eat, He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile."

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[1] I here follow the best line of transmission, albeit representing only 20% of the Greek manuscripts, that has 'consulting' in the present tense; the rest, followed by all versions, have the verb in the past. But the immediately following 'he would do many things' is attested by over 99%—a mere handful (0.4%), of objectively inferior quality, have 'greatly disturbed' or 'very perplexed' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). But why then did Herod hear John with pleasure, and why was he 'very sorry' (verse 26)? But what sorts of things would Herod take to John for his opinion? I suggest that Herod used John as a sounding board for administrative problems, and since he often followed his advice, he had an unusually good administration, there for a while. That is why he was genuinely sorry to lose John. For a fuller discussion, please see 'Herod and John' on my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] Opportune for Herodias.

[3] Herod had doubtless already drunk more than was good for him (he had probably started before the banquet), so his judgment was impaired. The girl's request sobered him up—too late.

[4] What effect do you suppose all that had on the party? The sight of that gory head would be enough to turn anyone's stomach. (And I wonder what she did with the head.)

[5] If I were one of those disciples, I probably would have been just a little dissatisfied with God—how could He permit His servant to suffer such a ridiculous and humiliating death? God is under no obligation to explain Himself. All accounts will be settled at the Judgment.

Bread for 5,000 men

32So they went away in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. **33**But many saw them going and recognized them,[1] and they ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived before them, and came together to Him.[2] **34**Well upon disembarking Jesus saw a large crowd[3] and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things.

35When it was late in the day, His disciples came to Him and said: "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. **36**Send them away so they may go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat."[4] **37**But in reply He said to them, "You feed them!"[5] They say to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and feed them?" **38**So He says to them: "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they knew they said, "Five, and two fish."

39Then He directed them all to recline in groups on the green grass. **40**So they reclined in 'plots' of hundreds and of fifties. **41**And taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to serve the people;[6] He

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[1] There is an even split in the attestation; half the Greek manuscripts have 'them' and the other half 'him', but the best line of transmission has 'them'. Consider: if the fishing boat were setting out to fish, there would not be 13 men in it; also, the boat was known and there was only one large group of men like that going around together; the people would not have to single out Jesus to know who they were. So 'them' is correct.

[2] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'and came together to Him', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[3] Let us try to get the picture. There is a large bay between Capernaum and Tiberias, the 'mouth' being some ten miles across. Just from the direction the boat took, many people would have a pretty good idea where they were headed. Unless there was a good tail wind, and especially if they had to row, people on the shore could easily outrun the boat, even covering a greater distance. Much like a modern marathon, the people would be scattered out along the shore for several miles, and any stragglers could follow the action. The front runners got ahead of the boat, and the followers were strung out, so wherever the boat put in, there would be people waiting; any who had gone too far would just double back. But people kept arriving and the crowd kept getting bigger (by the end of the day there were 5,000 men, plus women and children). The crowd frustrated the plan, but instead of being angry, Jesus felt compassion. [I'm afraid I often do just the opposite.]

[4] This was an obvious cop-out; the surrounding area would not have enough extra bread to feed 10,000 people (or more).

[5] They had no way of expecting such a response, since humanly speaking it was ridiculously impossible. In the end, the solution did pass through their hands, but unless Jesus was joking (which I doubt), He was telling <u>them</u> to perform the miracle, before they had seen it done. Wow!

[6] Let us pause and recall the scene. The Sacred Text affirms that there were about five thousand men, **without counting the women and children**. Now then, whenever you see a crowd of people, what is there usually the most of—isn't it women and children? In other words, I suppose that crowd was made up of at least 15,000 people. Okay, now try to imagine that you are one of those twelve disciples and you have just heard

also divided the two fish among them all. 42Well they all ate and were filled.[1] 43And they[2] picked up twelve full baskets of broken pieces; also of the fish.[3] 44There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.[4]

Jesus retires to pray

45Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida,[5] while He dismissed the crowd. 46And after taking leave of them He went up the mountain to pray.

A walk on water

47Now when evening had passed, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48And He saw[6] them straining at rowing, because the wind was against them. Well about the fourth watch

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the Master say: "**You** feed them!" Now what? Did the disciples have anything? As a matter of fact, no. They had neither money (which would not have helped much since they were a long way from town) nor food. Even the five loaves and two fish belonged to somebody else.

Can it be that Jesus was playing a joke on them, or was He serious? I don't know, but I prefer to think that He would not make a joke out of such a situation. But if He was serious, how could the disciples obey? Only with a miracle. In fact, they could not see a solution and gave the problem back to Jesus to solve; which He did. But did Jesus Himself hand the bread and fish to the crowd? No. Let us think about that scene a little more and we will see that the disciples still had to exercise faith.

The Record affirms that they all ate until they were "full" or "satisfied". It was not just a little something to tide them over. Have you ever considered how much bread and fish it would take to "fill" 15,000 people (who had gone without lunch)? It seems to me certain that when Jesus blessed and broke those loaves and fish there was not an instant multiplication, such that there was enough for everybody; the tremendous pile would have buried Jesus, the disciples and the closest of the people! Really. Just stop and think about it. It must not have been instantaneous. When Jesus placed some bread and fish in the hands of each disciple that was all there was, up to that moment.

Now then, try to imagine that you are one of those disciples with a handful of bread and fish, and you have to feed at least a thousand people (12 disciples and 15,000 people). Can you picture it? Wouldn't you feel just a little ridiculous taking that first step toward the crowd? Somehow the disciples find the courage and approach the people. The first one helps himself and, wonder of wonders, the supply is undiminished! The second one helps himself and the supply is unchanged. It was never used up—as they went around distributing, the food kept multiplying (to have twelve bushels of leftovers, the people were also involved in passing it on). If they had tired and stopped in the middle, half the people would have stayed hungry. If the disciples had decided to eat first, I rather imagine that the miracle would have been frustrated and the crowd would have gone hungry. The disciples ate last, but they ate very well, thank you very much! (Have you ever tried eating a bushel of bread?)

[1] The Text is clear—they ate until they were full.

[2] It probably was not the disciples who did the picking up, at least not by themselves. Also, those twelve baskets of pieces did not go with the disciples when they left.

[3] The large baskets were probably borrowed from fishing boats near-by (see the parallel accounts). Maybe the owners got their baskets back with interest!

[4] The term here refers exclusively to males, so with the women and children the crowd was doubtless over 10,000.

[5] For a detailed discussion about the location, please see: Bethsaida or Tiberias? on my website: www.prunch.org

[6] It was night, and they were about four miles away, so this was supernatural vision.

of the night[1] He comes to them walking on the water, and would have passed by them;[2] 49but they saw Him walking on the water, supposed He was a ghost, and yelled! 50Because they all saw Him and were terrified. Immediately He spoke with them and said: "Have courage! It is I; don't be afraid!" 51Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were totally astounded within themselves, and kept marveling. 52Because they had not understood about the loaves—their hearts had been hardened.[3]

In Genesaret

53After they had crossed over,[4] they came to the land of Genesaret and anchored there. 54When they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, 55and running about that whole surrounding region they began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. 56Wherever He entered—into villages, towns, or countryside—they would place the sick in the marketplaces, and they would beg Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment; and all who touched Him were healed.[5]

Jesus rebuts scribes and Pharisees

7 1Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered where He was, having come from Jerusalem.[6] 2And upon seeing some of His disciples eating bread with 'unclean'—that is, ceremonially unwashed—hands, they found fault. 3(Because the Pharisees, indeed all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things they have received and hold—washings of cups, pitchers, copper vessels and couches.)[7]

5Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why don't your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders,[8] but eat their

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1 That was 3 a.m.!

2 They had been rowing for about nine hours, and when Jesus sent them off He presumably knew what was going to happen. (We should not be surprised if God does similar things with us.) He obviously intended for them to see Him, otherwise He would not have come near enough. But He did not go straight at the boat, but was walking off to one side. Just why He did it that way, the Text does not say, but from the parallel accounts we know that it gave Peter a chance to try a walk. As soon as He got in the boat it was transported four miles to the shore, immediately (John 6:21).

3 By whom?

4 For a fuller explanation of what went on here, see the footnotes with the parallel account in John 6:16-25.

5 Wow!

6 They were a long way from 'home'. Doing something about Jesus had become a necessity.

7 Mark was writing for a Roman audience, hence this explanation (which helps other non-Jews as well).

8 They used tradition as an instrument of domination, to control the people. Jesus was challenging that control.

bread with unwashed hands?" 6So in answer He said to them: "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites,[1] as it stands written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7But in vain do they venerate me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'[2] 8Because having left the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men—washings of pitchers and cups, and many other similar things that you do."[3]

9Indeed He said to them: "You are very good at nullifying the commandment of God, so that you may keep your tradition. 10For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.'[4] 11But you say that if a man should say to father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is *Korban*' (that is, a gift *to God*),[5] 12you do not even allow him to do anything for his father or his mother any more, 13making the Word of God of no effect by your tradition that you have handed down. Yes, you do many such things."

That which really defiles

14Upon summoning the larger crowd He said to them: "Hear me, everyone, and under stand: 15There is nothing outside a man that can defile him by going into him;[6] rather, the things that come out of him, those are the ones that defile him. 16If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"[7]

17When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples started to question Him about the parable. 18So He said to them: "Can you really be without understanding? Don't you perceive that nothing that enters a man from outside can defile him, 19because it doesn't go into his heart, but into his stomach, which then expels the impure aspects of the food?"[8] 20He went on to say: "That which comes out of a man, **that** is what defiles him. 21Because from within, out of men's

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1 Jesus knows what they are about, and makes no effort to conciliate them.

2 See Isaiah 29:13. Do none of our churches have doctrines that are mere 'commandments of men'? All such 'worship' is in vain.

3 Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit '—washings of pitchers… that you do', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

4 See Exodus 20:12, 21:17.

5 The inconvenient question begs to be asked, 'Where did all the goods and money go?' It went into the pockets of the leaders, presumably, so they were really stealing from the elderly.

6 As the following context makes clear, the Lord is talking only about food. People are constantly being contaminated by things they see and hear.

7 Just over 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit verse 16 entirely, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.

8 A literal rendering would be, 'then into the latrine, thus making all foods clean'. I take it that Jesus was referring to the process in the stomach having a 'purifying' effect, since the sewer does just the opposite. Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts end the quote after 'latrine', and have Jesus declaring all foods clean.

hearts, the evil designs proceed—adulteries, fornications, murders, 22thefts, covetings, malignancies; deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, arrogance, foolishness—23all these malignant things proceed from within and defile the man."

A 'crumb' for a 'little dog'[1]

24Then He got ready and went from there into the region of Tyre and Sidon. He went into a house and did not want anyone to know it, but He could not escape notice. 25In fact, as soon as she heard about Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at His feet.[2] 26Now the woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenecian by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.[3] 27But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first; it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."[4] 28So she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." 29So He said to her, "Because of this saying you may go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30She went away to her house and found that the demon was gone and the daughter had been placed on the bed.[5]

Jesus heals a deaf mute

31Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus came

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1 This episode has puzzled me for quite some time. Consider:
a) In explaining His lack of response to the woman's pleading, Jesus affirms that He was only sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)—so what is He doing in Gentile territory?
b) The Text says He tried to get into a house without being seen; it follows that the group had kept a low profile, trying to avoid attention; and yet the woman intercepted Him well before He got there, and followed, crying out repeatedly (thereby blowing His 'cover')—so how did the woman learn of His presence, how did she know when and where to go, and how did she know to address Him as 'Son of David'?
c) Although He may have done more than is recorded, and we do not know how long He stayed, expelling that demon is all that is recorded—so why did He undertake that journey, apparently the only side trip to that region?

I suspect that this was a special case, similar to Cornelius, or the Ethiopian treasurer—she had gotten God's attention, somehow. I imagine that an angel told her where to go, and when, and to call Him, 'Son of David' (Messiah). Of course she gave us an unusual example of faith, humility and perseverance, but I wonder if God is not telling us something more: it is possible to get a 'crumb' (a real need), even when it is not the proper time-frame (*kairos*). For a detailed discussion, please see "A 'crumb' for a 'puppy'", on my website: www.prunch.org.

2 The parallel account in Matthew makes clear that this happened before He reached the house.

3 Matthew 15:21-28 gives more detail, which see.

4 Big dogs would not be in the house, so these would be little house pets, or perhaps puppies. This episode always moves me. In effect, Jesus called the woman a 'dog' (that is what Jews called Gentiles), and she accepted the classification. She was determined to get her 'crumb', and she did! And she left us a great example of humility and faith!

5 The verb 'place' is perfect passive; evidently the child was too small, or too weak, to have gotten there by herself.

to the Sea of Galilee by way of the Decapolis region.[1] 32Then they brought to Him a deaf man with thick speech[2] and begged Him to place His hand on him. 33After taking him aside, away from the crowd, He put His fingers in his ears; He also spat and touched his tongue.[3] 34Then looking up to heaven He sighed, and said to him, "*Ephphatha*!" that is, "Be opened!" 35Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he began to speak clearly. 36Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He would command them, so much the more they would proclaim it.[4] 37People were astonished beyond measure, saying: "He has done everything well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Food for 4,000 men

8 1In those days, the multitude being very large and not having anything to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them: 2"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have stayed with me three days now and have nothing to eat. 3If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will give out on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." 4His disciples answered Him, "From what source could anyone satisfy these people with bread here in a wilderness?"[5] 5He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." 6So He told the crowd to sit down on the ground; then taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the crowd, and they did. 7They also had a few small fish; so blessing them He said to distribute them as well. 8Well they ate and were filled; they even took up seven hampers of broken pieces that were left over. 9Now those who had eaten were about four thousand; and He sent them away. 10Then He got right into the boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.[6]

Bad leaven

11The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, requesting of Him a sign from heaven, by way of testing Him. 12But He sighed

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[1] He chose a roundabout way where He would not be known by sight, to avoid attention (presumably). On the other hand, it allowed Him to minister on the eastern side of the Sea.

[2] We learn to speak by imitating what we hear, so a deaf person will not speak correctly, even if there is nothing wrong with the tongue. In this case, the following verses indicate that there was also a problem with the tongue. If the man had never learned to speak correctly, this would be a further miracle.

[3] The Lord seems to have varied His procedure on purpose: He could heal ears without using His fingers, and could heal tongues without spittle.

[4] The news was so good they just could not contain it.

[5] They had already forgotten the 5,000!

[6] This was on the western side of the lake, so the feeding of the 4,000 probably took place on the Decapolis side. Why was 'the boat' there ready to be used? Jesus had probably sent someone to get it, possibly Peter's. They had been there for several days, so there was plenty of time.

deeply in His spirit and said: "Why does this generation seek a sign? I tell you emphatically, no sign shall be given to this generation!" 13Turning His back on them, He got back into the boat[1] and went off to the other side.

14(His disciples had forgotten to take bread; they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.)[2] 15And He charged them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."[3] 16So they started reasoning among themselves, saying, "It's because we have no bread." 17Being aware of it Jesus said to them: "Why are you reasoning because you have no bread? Do you still neither perceive nor understand? Do you still have hearts that have been hardened?[4] 18Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear, and do you not remember? 19When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you take up?" They say to Him, "Twelve." 20"And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many hampers full of pieces did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." 21So He said to them, "How is it that you still don't understand?"[5]

A blind man

22Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him. 23So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; then spitting into his eyes[6] and laying hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. 24And looking up he said, "I do see men, only they look like walking trees."[7] 25Then He put His hands on his eyes again, and made him look up; and he was restored and saw everyone clearly. 26Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the village nor tell anyone in the village."[8]

Jesus declares His death, and ministers on that basis

Peter is inspired

27Then Jesus and His disciples set out for the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who are people saying that I am?" 28So they answered, "John the Bap-

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1 One gains the impression that the Pharisees had not let Him get very far from the boat. Was Satan concerned to 'protect' Dalmanutha?

2 As with the 5,000, they did not keep the seven hampers of leftovers.

3 These would be two different 'leavens'. Mathew 16:12 explains that 'leaven' refers to doctrine.

4 The verb is in the passive voice, so one wonders who did the hardening.

5 It is easy to criticize those disciples as slow learners, and indeed the Lord was evidently unhappy with them, but I wonder if we would have done any better.

6 Dear me, how unsanitary! Jesus used a variety of procedures to heal people, and here He used two stages.

7 Evidently he was not born blind, because he knew what men and trees looked like.

8 Evidently he did not live in that village. A small handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'nor tell anyone in the village', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

tist; others Elijah; still others one of the prophets." **29**He said to them, "And who do you say that I am?" So Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ!" **30**Then He charged them that they should tell no one about Him.

31He then began to teach them that the Son of the Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. **32**He said these things quite plainly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. **33**But He turned, looked at His disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying: "Get behind me, Satan![1] You have in mind men's values, not God's values."

The cost of discipleship

34He summoned the crowd, along with His disciples, and said to them: "Whoever wants to follow along behind me must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **35**Because whoever may resolve to 'save' his life will waste it; but whoever may 'waste' his life for my sake and the Gospel's, he will save it.[2]

36Well, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet

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[1] From the parallel passage in Luke 9:18-22, where we have three present participles — 'answering', 'warning' and 'saying'—it is clear that Peter's two efforts form part of a single conversation. Well that scares me; that sends shivers up my spine. Within three minutes, or five at the most (we can see in Luke that this was a single conversation), Peter spoke two times. The first time it was God who put the words in Peter's mouth. It was Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explained the true nature of the transaction—Peter did not speak on his own but moved by the Father. So far so good; that God can do something like that comes as no surprise. It is the second time that is bothersome, because this time it was Satan who put the words in Peter's mouth! Again, it is Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explains the true nature of the transaction. When He uses the enemy's proper name, Satan, His meaning is inescapable. It really was Satan. Once again, we are face to face with the most terrible truth that there is in this life, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, he can put words in our mouths. I wish in the worst way that it was not true, but my wishes do not change reality. For more about this, please go to my website, www.prunch.org, and see the articles under 'Biblical spiritual warfare'. They are also in my book, *Essays*, 3rd edition.

[2] What does the Lord mean when He speaks of saving or losing one's 'life'? One does not lose one's soul for love of Christ. Nor is the reference to being killed. Rather, Jesus has in mind the life we live, the accumulated results of our living. All that I have done up to this moment plus all that I will yet do until overtaken by death or the rapture of the Church, whichever happens first—that is the 'life' that is at risk (in my own case).

Let us look at our Lord's words a little more closely. There seems to be a contradiction here—if you lose, you save; if you want to save, you lose. How can it work? The parallel passage, Matthew 16:27, gives more context. "For the Son of the Man is going to come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will repay each according to his deeds." Christ was thinking of the day of reckoning. In other words, "we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10) and "each of us will give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive his due according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). I understand that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is referring to the same occasion, the day of reckoning. After declaring that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, Paul speaks of different materials

forfeits his soul? 37Or what can a man give to get his life back again?[1]
38Yes, whoever is ashamed of me and my words[2] in this adulterous and
sinful generation, the Son of the Man will also be ashamed of him

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that one might use in building on it: "gold, silver, precious stones" or "wood, hay, straw". (Although the primary interpretation of this passage presumably has to do with the performance of teachers and leaders in the church, I believe it clearly applies to the daily life of each believer as well.) The point is, our deeds will be tested by fire. If fire has any effect upon gold or silver it is only to purify them, but its effect on hay and straw is devastating! Okay, so what?

Let us go back to the beginning. God created the human being for His glory; to reflect it and contribute to it. I suppose we may understand Psalm 19:1 and Isaiah 43:7 in this way, at least by extension. But Adam lost this capacity when he rebelled against God. For this reason the sentence that weighs against our race is that we "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But the Son came into the world to restore our lost potential. Ephesians 1:12 and 14 tell us that the object of the plan of salvation is "the praise of His glory" (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20). And 1 Corinthians 10:31 puts it into a **command**: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Now then, the point of all this is not to 'ruin' our lives, to take all the 'fun' out of them (as many seem to think). God is not being arrogant, unreasonable, too demanding. Quite the contrary—He is just trying to save us from throwing away our lives. Surely, because the glory of God is eternal (Psalm 104:31), and when I do something for His glory that something is transformed and acquires eternal value—it becomes 'gold, silver, precious stones'. Works done for the glory of God will go through the fire without harm. On the other hand, what is done with a view to our own ambitions and ideas is 'straw'. We all know what fire does to straw! To be a slave of Christ means to live with reference to the Kingdom; it means to do everything for the glory of God. In this way the slave 'saves' his life because he will be building it with 'gold and silver', which will pass through the fire at the judgment seat of Christ without loss. In contrast, the believer who refuses to be a slave of Jesus builds his life with 'hay and straw', which will be consumed by the fire—and so he 'loses' his life; he lived in vain; the potential that his life represented was wasted, thrown away. What a tragedy!

[1] Many versions have 'give in exchange for his soul', but how does that work? If I say to you, "I will give you my horse in exchange for your car", I have a horse and you have a car. If I say to you, "I will give you ??? in exchange for my soul", you have my soul. In that event, I have already lost my soul, and I want to know if there is any way I can get it back. But in the context it is the life that is in play, not the soul. Does not verse 38 make that clear? It is talking about the final judgment, or accounting, and it will be about what we did during our lifetime. So it is the life that is lived that is in view, not the soul. Someone who spent his life serving Mamon, threw his life away, forever. Please see 'Fire loves straw', on my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] We are not allowed to be ashamed of the <u>words</u> that Jesus spoke; it is mandatory to agree with what He taught. Surely, because we will be judged by those words. "The one who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken, that is what will judge him on the last day; because I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me, <u>He</u> gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:48-49). So how can those words judge you? They will judge you based on what you did with them. But how <u>can</u> they judge you? They can judge you because they are living (Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:23, Acts 7:38). Any word delivered by the Sovereign Creator will be authoritative.

whenever He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels."[1]

A miniature of the Kingdom

9 [1]And He said to them, "I tell you assuredly: there are some standing here who will certainly not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God present with power." [2]After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up on a high mountain alone by themselves. Then He was transfigured in front of them; [3]His clothing became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth is able to whiten. [4]And Elijah appeared to them, along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. [5]Well Peter reacted by saying to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three shelters: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." [6](Because they were terrified, he didn't know what to say.)[2] [7]With that a cloud was covering them and a **Voice**[3] came out of the cloud: "This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to Him!" [8]And then, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

[9]Now as they were coming down from the mountain,[4] He ordered them not to recount to any one the things they had seen until the Son of the Man had risen from the dead. [10]So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the 'rising from the dead' meant. [11]And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" [12]So in answer He said to them: "Elijah indeed does come first, and restores all things; as it is also written[5] concerning the Son of the Man that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt. [13]Still, I even say to you that 'Elijah' has come, and they did to him as they wished" (as it is written about him).[6]

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[1] The world in which we live is no longer 'post-modern', it is becoming increasingly anti-Christian. In North America and Europe people have already been put in prison for preaching what the Bible says. To spend eternity in the Lake of Fire is the price you will pay for being 'politically correct' in today's world.

[2] He threw away an excellent opportunity to say nothing.

[3] Peter never forgot that Voice! See 2 Peter 1:17-18.

[4] This was the next day; they spent the night on the mountain (Luke 9:37). Doubtless a lot happened up there that was not recorded.

[5] The translation of this clause is not transparent, and it has given rise to a variety of 'efforts'. We should go back to the disciples' question: Why do the scribes . . . ? The underlying reason was that it was written; that is why Jesus reaffirmed that Elijah would still come. If the Text says that he will come, he will come. Then Jesus transferred the question to his own person, also referring to the Text: it is written (I have used 'as' instead of 'how').

[6] Besides the question of whether John is, or is not, Elijah, verse 13 presents us with another difficulty: where does Jesus' statement end? Most of the versions I have seen include the whole verse in His statement. The final clause is: "as it is written about him"; and it refers to the way that John died. But there is no mention of this in the OT; so did Jesus make a mistake? How could He say 'it is written' if it wasn't? My solution is to end His statement at "they wished", making the final clause a parenthetical aside by the author of the book, Mark. When Mark wrote, Matthew's Gospel was already in circulation, and it contains an account of John's death. For that matter, Mark himself had already written down the episode in his chapter six. I understand that as soon as

The nine couldn't do it

14Upon coming to the disciples, He saw a large crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. **15**Well as soon as the whole crowd saw Him, they were excited and ran to greet Him. **16**He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" **17**In answer a man in the crowd said: "Teacher, I brought you my son, who has a mute spirit.[1] **18**And wherever it seizes him it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. Indeed, I spoke to your disciples, that they might cast it out, but they could not." **19**But He answered him by saying: "O unbelieving generation,[2] how long shall I be with you, how long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me!" **20**So they brought him to Him. Upon seeing Him the spirit convulsed him, and falling to the ground he started wallowing, foaming at the mouth. **21**Then He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said: "From childhood. **22**Really, it has often thrown him both into fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." **23**Jesus said to him, "It's 'if you can believe';[3] all things are possible to the one who believes." **24**Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, "Lord,[4] I believe; help my unbelief!"[5]

25When Jesus saw that the crowd was running up, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit,[6] **I** am commanding you, get out of him and never enter him again!"[7] **26**Then it

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the Gospels were turned over to the public they were recognized as Scripture, inspired writings. As for the question of whether John was, or was not, Elijah, please see "John is not Elijah" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[1] Here was a desperate father who considered that his problem was more important than a theological discussion. So he interrupts (although the discussion may have been about the demon and their failure).

[2] In the parallel passage in Matthew 17:17 we find, "Oh faithless and perverse generation!" But why would Jesus use such a strong term as 'perverse'? To reject the truth and the evidences is to be perverse. I take it that the term was directed to the disciples, who, because of all that they had witnessed and experienced, should have made more progress than that. But how about us—are we living and doing according to the truth and the evidence? Really?

[3] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'believe', which alters the meaning (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] Around 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'with tears' and 'Lord', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[5] I can sympathize with this father. When I consider all the things that the Lord Jesus said could be done with faith, and that I have yet to do, I too must say, "Help my unbelief!"

[6] The father had said it was a mute spirit; Jesus adds that it is also deaf—the two often go together.

[7] Note that Jesus forbad any return. Demons will do anything to deceive, confuse or demoralize us. If you resist a spirit, he leaves, but another may immediately take the place of the first and produce the same effect, making you think that nothing happened, so that you feel demoralized. If you resist but do not forbid a return, he leaves

yelled, convulsed him violently, and came out. Well he looked to be dead; so much so that many said, "He's dead." **27**But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he stayed on his feet. **28**Well upon His entering a house His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we cast it out?" **29**He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing except prayer and fasting."[1]

Jesus predicts His death again

30Having gone out from there they were passing through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know; **31**because He was teaching His disciples and saying to them, "The Son of the Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and once killed[2] he will rise on the third day." **32**But they were not understanding this information, yet were afraid to ask Him.

About humility

33Then He came to Capernaum; and once in the house He asked them, "What were you debating among yourselves on the road?" **34**But they kept silent, because on the road they had debated among themselves who was greater. **35**So He sat down, called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." **36**Then He took a child and stood him in their midst, and embracing him said to them, **37**"Whoever receives one such child in my name

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but may come back, in an hour, a day or a week. If I have to rebuke the enemy I now rebuke not only the spirit actually at work but any and all others that might wish to attack the person in the same way. I used to forbid any repetition of the attack, but now I send them to the Abyss.

I believe Luke 8:31 give us basis for consigning demons to the Abyss, thereby reducing the number of the enemy's forces (against us). There we read that the demons begged Jesus "not to order them to go into the Abyss" ("the Abyss" is the same phrase that the AV renders as "the bottomless pit" in Revelation 20:1). That means that He could have—I conclude that He refrained from doing so because He had not yet won the victory, at that time. But now it is different. In John 14:12 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes into me, the works that I do he will do also; even greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father." What does "because I go to my Father" imply? I conclude that it must be His victory—could He have returned if He had failed, if He had not succeeded in destroying the devil (Hebrews 2:14)? That is why we are supposed to be doing "**greater**" works—like ordering demons into the Abyss, for instance.

C. Fred Dickason, who has personally ministered to over 400 demonized believers, says that his experience indicates that once a demon is ordered into the Abyss it does not come back (*Demon Possession & the Christian*, Moody Press, 1987). Paul E. Billheimer says much the same in *Destined to Overcome* (Bethany House Publishers, 1982, p. 46). Can you imagine if God's people really got a hold on this? We could continuously **reduce** the number of demons opposing us! Hallelujah! So then, why not order all recalcitrant demons into the Abyss? In fact, why not do the same for any and all that intrude upon our notice?

[1] Four Greek manuscripts (all inferior), against 1651, omit 'and fasting', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[2] This seems to us to be an awkward expression, but that is what the Text says.

receives me, and whoever receives me receives not *only* me, but the One who sent me."

Either for, or against

38So John answered Him saying, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, one who doesn't follow us;[1] and we forbade him, because he doesn't follow us." **39**But Jesus said: "Do not forbid him, because no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterward speak evil of me. **40**For he who is not against you is for you.[2] **41**Further, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ's, I tell you with certainty, he will by no means lose his reward.[3]

About offenses

42"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe into me to fall,[4] it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.[5] **43**Further, if your hand is causing you to fall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into the Life maimed than having both hands to go away into Gehenna,[6] into the unquenchable fire—**44**where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'[7] **45**And if your foot is causing you to fall, cut it off; it is better for you to

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1 Around 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'one who doesn't follow us', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

2 Instead of 'you', some 10% of the Greek manuscripts have 'us' (both times) (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

3 But how and where could an unbeliever be 'rewarded'? I suppose with blessing in this life, since it won't be in Heaven.

4 It is clear from the context that the verb 'fall' throughout this paragraph refers to a spiritual fall with eternal consequences. I believe that the Lord was being perfectly serious and literal here. I suppose most deadly temptations come at us through the eye. Obviously it would be better to pluck out an eye, literally, if it would stop you in time, than to fall from the Faith and wind up in the Lake. In the first place, most people are not prepared to take such drastic measures, and in the second, by the time they wake up to what is happening, they have already crossed the line. That is why Hebrews 3:12-14 is precisely to the point: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today", lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of the Endeavor steadfast to the end."

5 The implication is clear: anyone who deliberately destroys a child's faith in Jesus has bought himself a one-way ticket to the Lake of Fire. I suppose that 'child' could include high school and college students.

6 Strictly speaking, 'Gehenna' was the local dump outside Jerusalem—something was always being burned, and there would be plenty of worms. But Jesus here uses it as a figure for the Lake of Fire, the 'second death'.

7 See Isaiah 66:24. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'into the unquenchable fire' at the end of verse 45, and also omit verses 44 and 46 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc., except that most keep 'into the unquenchable fire' in verse 43 (but not in verse 45). I find the figure of an immortal worm to be rather daunting—always chewing on you, but never finishing you off! (Evidently there were those who thought that saying it once was quite enough.) For a complete discussion, please see "Hades is not Hell" on my website: www.prunch.org.

enter into the Life lame than having both feet to be thrown into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire—[46]where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' [47]And if your eye is causing you to fall, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than having both eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna of fire—[48]where 'the[1] worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

[49]"Further, everyone will be seasoned with fire,[2] and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.[3] [50]Salt is good, but if the salt loses its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."[4]

Down with divorce!

10 [1]Then He set out from there and came into the borders of Judea, by way of the other side of the Jordan. Again, crowds gathered to Him, and as was His custom, He began to teach them once more. [2]Then some Pharisees approached to test Him and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce a wife?" [3]So in answer He said to them, "What did Moses command you?" [4]They said, "Moses permitted one to write a certificate of divorce and to put away."[5] [5]Jesus answered and said to them: "It was due to your hardness of heart that he wrote you this precept. [6]But from the beginning of creation, God made them a male and a female.[6] [7]'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, [8]and the two will be turned into one flesh.'[7] So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. [9]Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

[10]When they were in the house, His disciples asked Him again about the same subject. [11]So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; [12]and if a woman divorces her husband and gets married to another, she commits adultery."[8]

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[1] I here follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the Greek manuscripts.

[2] Now what might this mean? Well, according to Isaiah 48:19, God refines His people in the furnace of affliction, and Zachariah 13:9 and Malachi 3:3 compare God to a refiner purifying gold and silver with fire. "Whom the LORD loves He chastens, yes scourges every son whom He accepts" (Hebrews 12:6 and Proverbs 3:12). We all receive the 'fire' of trial.

[3] Some 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit the second clause of this verse, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. But just what might <u>this</u> mean? Well, Romans 12:1 speaks of a 'living sacrifice' and in Matthew 5:13 Jesus calls His followers 'the salt of the earth'. If you present yourself as a living sacrifice to Jesus, He will make you salty.

[4] For 'salty' people living and working together, 'peace' may not be easy. They need the Holy Spirit.

[5] See Deuteronomy 24:1, 3.

[6] See Genesis 1:27, 5:2.

[7] See Genesis 2:24. The Text says 'two', not 'three', 'four', or whatever. The 'two' are a man and a woman; not two men, not a woman and a demon, or whatever.

[8] Note that Jesus recognizes that the woman may take the initiative. Whoever takes the initiative commits adultery.

Jesus blesses little children

13People started bringing little children to Him, that He might touch them; so the disciples started rebuking those doing the bringing. 14But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them: "Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them, because the Kingdom of God is made up of such. 15I tell you assuredly, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child does[1] will certainly not enter it." 16And taking them in His arms and laying His hands on them, He blessed them.[2]

A rich young man

17As Jesus set out on the road, someone came running up, knelt before Him and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 18So Jesus said to Him: "Why do you call me 'good'?[3] No one is good except one—God. 19You know the command-ments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not give false testimony,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and mother.'"[4] 20In answer he said to Him, "Teacher,[5] I have kept all these since I was young." 21Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him,[6] and said to him: "One thing you lack; go, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, take up the cross,[7] and follow me." 22But he was dismayed at the suggestion and went away sorrowing, because he had many possessions.[8]

23Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to get into the Kingdom of God!" 24But the disciples were astounded at His words. So Jesus tried again and said to them: "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches[9] to enter the Kingdom of God. 25It is actually easier for a camel to go through a

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1 Jesus did not say that only children can be saved; rather, one must believe the way a child believes, without question, and literally.

2 Blessing children is an important thing to do.

3 Jesus was not denying that He was good; the trouble was that the man called him good without recognizing Him as God. Had the man recognized Him as God, He would not have objected.

4 See Exodus 20:12-16, Deuteronomy 5:16-20.

5 He did not repeat the 'mistake'.

6 The verb is *αγαπαω*; He was concerned for his wellbeing.

7 Scarcely 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'take up the cross' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

8 Jesus had put His finger on the one the man was not obeying—he was not loving his neighbor as himself.

9 Five Greek manuscripts (all of objectively inferior quality), against 1650, omit 'for those who trust in riches', producing an obviously inferior text, but even so they are followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. NIV favors us with a footnote: "Some manuscripts *is for those who trust in riches*". They use 'some' to refer to the 1,650, against only five. Is that not a dishonest use of the English language? (There are probably hundreds of such footnotes.)

needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."[1] [26]Then they were totally astonished, saying to each other, "Who then can be saved?" [27]But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; because all things are possible with God."

It pays to serve Jesus

[28]Then Peter began to say to Him, "So, we have left all and followed you." [29]In answer Jesus said: "I tell you assuredly, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[2] or children or fields, for my sake and for that of the Gospel, [30]who will not receive a hundred times more,[3] now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and father and mother[4] and children and fields (with persecutions)—and in the age to come, eternal life. [31]But many first will be last, and last first."[5]

Jesus predicts His death a third time

[32]Now they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going ahead of them; this surprised them,[6] and as they followed they started to be afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that were about to happen to Him: [33]"Take note, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of the Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles; [34]and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And on the third day He will rise again."[7]

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[1] Ouch! In the Old Testament it was expected that godly living would be accompanied by material blessing. The trouble is that we tend to get more attached to the blessing than to the Blesser. Our Lord's words in Matthew 6:24 are to the point: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Anyone who serves 'mammon' is not serving God, and therefore is not in the Kingdom. As for the 'camel' and the 'needle', there have been attempts to explain this away, but since Jesus went on to say it was "impossible", we may take them literally.

[2] Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'or wife' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[3] Actually, the 'hundredfold' should presumably not be taken in a strictly literal sense. I take it that the Lord is saying that we will be abundantly recompensed, if not down here, certainly in heaven. In my own experience, in the absence of my real mother, whenever I needed one God provided one. If you only have one brother, that is all you can leave, obviously, so the plural nouns are also contingent on the facts in the case. 'Eternal' life is a quality of life, and it begins down here.

[4] I follow 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading 'father and mother'. 55% have 'mothers', as in most versions. Note that Jesus does not promise more wives!

[5] This sounds like a push-down stack—first one in, last one out.

[6] I gather that Jesus was going forward with a determined pace, which at first surprised them, but then something about His demeanor made them apprehensive.

[7] Jesus knew perfectly well that this was His last trip to Jerusalem, and He had detailed knowledge of what would happen. (He had been given the word by Moses and Elijah—Luke 9:31.)

Selfish ambition rebuked

35Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we may ask." **36**So He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" **37**They said to Him, "Grant to us that we may sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory."[1] **38**But Jesus said to them: "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am drinking, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with?" **39**They said to Him, "We are able."[2] So Jesus said to them: "You will indeed drink the cup that I am drinking, and you will be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; **40**but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to grant, but is for whom it has been prepared."[3]

41Well when the ten heard it they began to be indignant with James and John.[4] **42**But Jesus summoned them and said to them: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43**But it must not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you must be your servant, **44**and whoever desires to be your number one must be slave of all. **45**For even the Son of the Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."[5]

Blind Bartimaeus

46They came to Jericho. Then as He was going out from Jericho,[6] with His disciples and a large crowd, the blind Bartimaeus[7] (son of Timaeus) was sitting by the roadside begging. **47**And when he heard that it was Jesus the Natsorean,[8] he began to call out and say, "O Son of David,[9] Jesus, have mercy on me!" **48**Many started telling him to shut up, but he started calling out even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" **49**So Jesus stood still and said to call him. Then they called the blind

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1 Isn't this a strange request? Evidently visions of the Messianic Kingdom drove all other considerations from their minds, only they wanted to be top dogs!

2 How did they know?

3 If Jesus Himself is at the Father's right, then it follows that the Father is on Jesus' left, so only one of the spots is 'available', except that the occupant is already known.

4 Now just why, do you suppose, were they upset?

5 The Lord Jesus is our example.

6 The parallel account in Luke has Jesus entering Jericho, not leaving it. At that time, there were two Jerichos, about a kilometer apart. What better place for an enterprising beggar than between the two towns? For a detailed discussion of the three accounts (also Matthew), please see: Entering, or leaving Jericho? on my website: www.prunch.org

7 Mark is the only account that gives the man's name—evidently he was known (or at least became known).

8 The Text has 'Natsorean', not 'Nazarene (Natsarene)'. Natsorean is presumably a reference to Isaiah 11:1, the Branch—Jesus was the Branch-man. Natsarene just means that He came from Natsareth. For further discussion, please see "The Natsorean" on my website: www.prunch.org.

9 Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as the Messiah.

man, saying to him: "Courage! Get up! He's calling you!" **50**Tossing off his cloak,[1] he got up and went to Jesus. **51**Jesus reacted by saying to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"[2] The blind man said to Him, "Rabouni,[3] that I may see again!" **52**So Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has healed you." And immediately he could see, and followed Jesus on the road.

The last week

The 'triumphal' entry—Sunday, 03/31/30 AD

11 **1**Now when they were drawing near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, **2**saying to them: "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you enter it you will find a foal tied, on which no man has sat. Untie and bring it. **3**And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and thereupon he will send it here."[4]

4So they went and found the foal tied at the door, out in the street, and they loosed it. **5**Some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the foal?" **6**So they answered them just as Jesus had instructed, and they let them go. **7**Then they brought the foal to Jesus, and they placed their clothes on it, and He sat on it. **8**And many spread their clothes on the road, while others were cutting leafy branches from the trees[5] and spreading them on the road. **9**Both those who went in front and those who followed started calling out, saying: "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"[6] **10**"Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David that is coming in the name of the Lord!"[7] "Hosanna in the highest!"

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[1] Now why did he abandon his cloak? He expected to be healed—being able to see he could easily find it (and who else would want a beggar's cloak?).

[2] Does God ever take anything for granted from us? He knows what we need before we ask, but we must ask.

[3] Some 65% of the Greek manuscripts spell the word with two 'b's; I follow the best line of transmission, but there is no difference in meaning: 'my teacher/master'.

[4] At first glance the rendering, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly" (based on less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts), looks inviting, but it doesn't quite fit. The animal would be gone for a number of hours, and one would expect a differ-ent verb. The seeming difficulty posed by the change from 'he' to 'they' (in verse 6) is easily answered: in verse 3 the 'he' agrees in number with the preceding 'anyone', and the owner of the animal may have been among the bystanders (verses 5 & 6). In any case, the owner evidently knew who 'the Lord' was, and had presumably been forewarned—why else was the foal already tied outside? For a harmonization of the parallel accounts, please see "How many animals" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[5] Well under 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'fields' instead of 'trees' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] See Psalms 118:26.

[7] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'in the name of the Lord' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Different people were saying different things and Mark records some of the variety (he may well have been there; in fact, I suspect that he probably was).

11So Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when He had looked around at everything,[1] the hour being late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

A barren fig tree

12Now the next day, as they were leaving Bethany, He was hungry. 13And seeing from a distance a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it He found nothing but leaves, because it was not fig season.[2] 14So Jesus reacted by saying to it, "Let no one ever eat fruit from you again!"[3] And His disciples were listening.

Jesus 'purifies' the temple (2nd time)—Monday, 04/01/30 AD

15So they came to Jerusalem, and entering the temple Jesus began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of the dove sellers. 16And He would not allow anyone to carry a container through the temple. 17And He kept teaching them by saying: "Is it not written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?[4] but you have made it 'a den of robbers'!"[5]

18Well the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and kept on looking for a way to destroy Him;[6] because they were afraid of Him, in that all the people were astonished at His teaching. 19When evening came, He went out of the city.

How to drown a mountain

20Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21And Peter, remembering, said to Him: "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has dried up!" 22So in answer Jesus said to them: "Have faith in God.[7] 23Because I tell you assuredly, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be picked up and be thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that the things he says will happen,

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[1] He knew what He had to do the next day (clean out the commerce), but there wasn't enough time to do a proper job just then.

[2] Even though it was no longer fig season, sometimes an occasional fig would dry on the tree, and of course a dried fig is edible. Had the leaves all fallen, He could have seen from a distance that there were not any figs (any fig that was visible would have been eaten long before). For a harmonization of the parallel accounts, please see "The cursed fig-tree" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] Dear me; it would seem to be unreasonable to curse a tree out of season—it was not the tree's fault that it had no figs! First, being the Creator, Jesus had the right to do as He did; but second, it was probably a prophetic act wherein the fig tree represented Israel; and third, He wanted to teach His disciples about faith.

[4] See Isaiah 56:7. Note that it has always been God's intention that the whole world know and worship Him.

[5] See Jeremiah 7:11. I get the impression that He kept repeating this as He went about His task.

[6] They had already determined that they had to kill Him, long before.

[7] I wonder if the intended meaning might not be, 'have the faith of a god' ('god' is in the genitive case and without an article)—a god giving an order would expect to be obeyed.

he will have whatever he says.[1] 24That is why I say to you, whatever things you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive, and you will have them.

25"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father, who is in heaven, may also forgive you your trespasses. 26But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses."[2]

Jesus' authority questioned—Tuesday, 04/02/30 AD

27Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders came to Him. 28And they said to Him, "By what authority are you doing these things?" and "Who gave you this authority to do these things?" 29So in answer Jesus said to them: "I also will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30The baptism of John: was it from heaven or from men?"[3] 31They considered among themselves, saying: "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' 32But if we say, 'From men'…"—they feared the people, for everyone held John to really be a prophet. 33So they answered Jesus by saying, "We don't know."[4] And in answer Jesus said to them, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Parable of wicked tenants

12 1Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard—put a hedge around it, dug a wine trough, built a tower—rented it to farmers and went on a journey. 2At the proper time he sent a slave to the farmers, that he might receive from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3But they took him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. 4Again he sent another slave to them, and that one they wounded in the head by stoning,[5] and sent him away shamefully treated. 5Again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. 6Finally, still having his one beloved son, he even sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7But those

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[1] It is an ongoing source of frustration to me that I have not yet attained to this level of faith.

[2] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 26 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc. The last three words of verses 25 and 26 are identical (in the Greek Text), giving rise to a common transcriptional error—after writing the first, the copyist's eye returns to the second and he continues, having omitted what was in between. Verse 26 reinforces and emphasizes the need for forgiveness—the reference is to things done against us personally (attacks against the Kingdom are different).

[3] Some 80% of the Greek manuscripts continue with 'answer me', as in most (if not all) versions; I follow the best line of transmission, albeit representing only 20% of the manuscripts. 'Answer me' is already in verse 29.

[4] Of course they did know, and they also knew who Jesus was, and the source of His authority, but they had chosen to rebel.

[5] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'by stoning' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

farmers said to one another: 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.' 8So they took him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.[1]

9"What therefore will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those farmers, and give the vineyard to others. 10Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected, is the very one that became the cornerstone; 11this was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"[2]

12So they started looking for a way to arrest Him, because they knew He had spoken the parable against them, but they were in fear of the crowd. Then they left Him and went away.

Render to Caesar

13Then they[3] sent some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians[4] to Him, in order to trap Him with a question. 14Upon arriving they said to Him: "Teacher, we know that you are honest—you do not 'protect' anyone, because you do not consider the position of people, but teach the way of God in truth[5]—is it right to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? 15Should we pay, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, He said to them: "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." 16So they did, and He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." 17Then Jesus answered them by saying, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."[6] And they marveled at Him.

A hypothetical situation[7]

18Then some Sadducees came to Him—they say there is no resurrection—and asked Him, saying: 19"Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife, but no children, then his brother should take that wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 20Well there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and dying left no offspring. 21So the second one took her, and died; and neither did he leave any offspring. The third likewise. 22In fact, all seven took her, and left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. 23In the resurrection,

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[1] The details of this particular parable strike me as improbable. Most owners would take punitive measures after the second slave, if not the first. But the parable was a picture of how Israel had treated God, over the centuries, culminating in the death of His Son.

[2] See Psalm 118:22-23.

[3] The reference is presumably to the leaders mentioned in 11:27. They were hoping to be able to denounce Jesus to the Governor, who was Caesar's representative.

[4] Pharisees and Herodians represented contrary political positions; that they should join forces against Jesus indicates the level of their desperation.

[5] They were really almost too obvious.

[6] We are to do both: tithe and pay taxes. The Lord's answer left them empty-handed.

[7] If you ever have to deal with someone who wants to argue on the basis of a hypothetical situation—be careful! Like these Sadducees, they will have a hidden agenda.

whenever they may rise, whose wife will she be?—because all seven had her as wife."

24Then in answer Jesus said to them: "You do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God[1]—is this not the reason that you err? **25**Whenever people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in the heavens.[2] **26**But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, about the Bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **27**He is not the God of dead people, but the God of living ones. You are therefore badly mistaken."[3]

The greatest commandment

28Then one of the scribes came on the scene, heard them arguing, realized that He had answered them well, and asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" **29**Jesus answered him:[4] "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD your[5] (pl) God, the LORD is one; **30**and you (sg) shall love the LORD your (sg) God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'[6] This is the first commandment.[7] **31**And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'[8] There is no other commandment greater than these."

32So the scribe said to Him: "Well said, teacher; you said truly that He is one, and there is no other except He. **33**And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soul[9] and with all the strength, and to love the neighbor as oneself, is more than all the

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1 What a sad commentary! But is it not true of most religious leaders today, as well?

2 Jesus does not say that angels do not have gender. Angels are always treated as male, not female—without females there could never be baby angels. That may be why they are evidently fascinated by the female of our species (1 Corinthians 11:10). Because of death, on this planet we must reproduce, or the race will die out. Since there is no death in Heaven, there will be no need to reproduce; it follows that 'marriage' and 'family' will be irrelevant up there.

3 The Sadducees were basically materialists, and like them any materialists today will also be badly mistaken in their whole world view.

4 I take it that Jesus answered without hesitation—this one was easy.

5 I follow the best line of transmission in reading 'your', albeit some 75% of the Greek manuscripts have 'our', as in all versions.

6 See Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The 'love' here cannot be limited to emotion, obviously. We are to love God with our whole being, all we have. But how does that work? Love for God is demonstrated by obedience, so all we do is to be oriented by God's will. When we check Deuteronomy, we find 'heart', 'soul' and 'strength', but not 'mind'; there are only three prepositional phrases, not four. I would say that the Hebrew word rendered as 'strength' covers a wider semantic area, so the Holy Spirit had Mark add a phrase to make the translation more complete.

7 Just over 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'this is the first commandment' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

8 See Leviticus 19:18.

9 Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'and with all the soul' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."[1] And after that no one dared ask Him any question.

Is the Christ David's son?

35Then, teaching in the temple, Jesus reacted by saying: "How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is David's son? 36Because David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet."'[2] 37Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so how can He be his son?" The large crowd listened to Him with pleasure.

Down with hypocrisy!

38Then He said to them in His teaching: "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk about in long robes and to get greetings in the market places, 39and the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts; 40who devour the houses of widows,[3] while praying long and loud for a show. These will receive a more severe judgment."

A widow's offering

41Then Jesus sat down opposite the offering chest and started watching how the people were depositing money into the chest. Many rich people put in large amounts. 42A certain poor widow also came and put in two 'lepta', which equal a 'quadrans'.[4] 43So summoning His disciples He said to them: "I tell you assuredly that this poor widow has put more in the chest than all these contributors; 44because they all gave out of their excess, but she, out of her lack, put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."[5]

The temple will be destroyed

13 1Then as He was going out from the temple, one of His disciples said to Him: "Teacher, just look! Such stones, such buildings!" 2In answer Jesus said to him: "Do you see these great buildings? Here not a single stone will be left upon another; each one will be thrown down."[6]

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[1] Quite right—all the man had to do was put it into practice.

[2] See Psalm 110:1. Note that the Lord Jesus affirms that David wrote under divine inspiration!

[3] Presumably, when the man died the widow no longer had the means to clear any debt; so they would just take over the house and put the widow out in the street.

[4] The 'lepta' was a tiny coin used in Israel, but not in Rome; their smallest coin was a 'quadrans'. Since Mark is writing for a Roman audience, he uses a value they can understand.

[5] Wow! I imagine she was appealing to God for help.

[6] This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD. The Jews used the temple buildings as their last bastion of defense. They themselves set fire to some buildings and the Roman soldiers finished the job. Apparently the gold on the dome melted and ran down the cracks between the stones. So the looters literally tore stone from stone to make sure they got all the gold.

The end of the age

3Then as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple,[1] Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him privately: 4"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign whenever all these things are about to be fulfilled?"[2] 5So by way of an answer to them Jesus began by saying: "Take care that no one deceives you. 6Because many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. 7But whenever you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not let it distress you; because happen they must, but the end is not yet. 8Because nation will be raised against nation,[3] and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and tumults.[4] These things are the beginning of birth pains.[5]

9"But watch out for yourselves, because they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in synagogues, and you will be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, as a testimony to them. 10Also, the Gospel must first be proclaimed to all the ethnic nations.[6] 11Now whenever they lead you away and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand nor premeditate what you will say;[7] rather, whatever is given to you in that hour, speak that, because it will not be you doing the speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

12"Further, brother will betray brother to death and a father his child, and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13And you will be hated by all for my name's sake,[8] yet he who endures to the end, he will be saved.[9]

The Great Tribulation

14"Now whenever you see the 'abomination of desolation', the one

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1 I take the point to be that He could see the temple from where He was sitting.

2 There are two questions: "When these things?" and "What the sign?" The answer to the first is given in Luke 21:20-24. The answer to the second begins here in verse 5.

3 The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, who does the raising?

4 In our day we have seen violence and looting in the wake of earthquakes and food shortages. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'and tumults' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 The Text has 'birth pains', so what is the 'baby'? I suppose the 'baby' is the Messianic Kingdom.

6 See the footnote at Matthew 24:14.

7 In Seminary I was taught that this instruction is for martyrs, not preachers! But churches today would be better off if their pastors got their messages from the Holy Spirit.

8 It is already the case in many places that anyone who takes a public stand in defense of biblical values is vituperated by the media—some have gone to prison in what once were 'Christian' countries.

9 We must endure persecution, without denying the Lord—if you deny Him, He will deny you.

spoken of by Daniel the prophet,[1] standing where he should not"—let the reader understand—"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **15**Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.[2] **16**Let him who is in the field not return to his things to get his cloak. **17**But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! **18**And pray that your flight not take place in winter,[3] **19**because those will be days of affliction such as there has not been the like from the beginning of the creation that God created until now,[4] and never again shall be.[5] **20**If the Lord did not cut those days short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He did shorten the days.[6]

21"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' 'Look, there!' do not believe it; **22**because false christs and false prophets will be raised up,[7] and they will show signs and wonders so as to even mislead the elect, if that were possible. **23**So you watch out! See, I have told you everything in advance.

The return of Christ

24"But in those days, after that tribulation, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; **25**the stars of heaven will be falling, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.'[8] **26**And then they will see the Son of the Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.[9] **27**And then He will send His angels and gather together His elect from the four winds, from earth's extreme point to heaven's extreme point.[10]

Example of the fig tree

28"Now learn this example from the fig tree: whenever its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, one knows that the summer is near.

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[1] Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[2] I confess that I cannot imagine a situation where a few seconds would make any difference. Evidently the attack will be sudden.

[3] I find this instruction to be curious. Is the Lord really saying that by praying we can influence the time of year when the 'abomination' will take place? I wonder.

[4] The Lord Jesus Christ affirms that God created this world; anyone who embraces the evolutionary hypothesis of origins is calling Him a liar.

[5] There has always been affliction and distress in the world, but not like what is coming.

[6] The tense of the verb is definitely past. The Lord is evidently referring to something that has already been determined.

[7] Again, the voice is passive; I suppose it is Satan that does the raising up.

[8] See Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4, but this is not said to be a quotation; it is more like an allusion. The reference is presumably to angelic beings, not literal stars (just one would demolish the planet).

[9] Note that this Return will be visible, in contrast to the Rapture (as I understand it).

[10] I have difficulty understanding this statement, if it is to be taken literally. That the elect will be collected from all over the world, no problem, but from all over heaven? However, since resurrected saints will participate in the administration of the Messianic Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 5:10, 20:6), perhaps they are included in this statement.

29Even so you also, whenever you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! 30Assuredly I tell you that this generation[1] will certainly not pass away until all these things happen. 31The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.[2]

Watch!

32"Now concerning that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels who are in heaven, not the Son,[3] but only the Father. 33Watch! Keep alert! Pray![4] Because you do not know when that time will be. 34It is like a man off on a journey, having left his house and given the authority to his slaves, and to each his work; and he commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. 35Therefore be watchful, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming—at evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or early morning—36lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37The things I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"[5]

The Sanhedrin make plans

14 1It was two days before the Passover and the Unleavened Bread.[6] The chief priests and the scribes were looking for an underhanded way to seize and kill Him. 2But they said, "Not during the feast, or the people may riot."

An anointing in Simon's house

3Being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He was reclining at a meal, a woman came having an alabaster vase of very costly perfume of pure nard. Then she broke the vase and began to pour it over His head. 4But there were some who were expressing indignation to one another and saying: "To what purpose was this perfume wasted? 5It could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to

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[1] "This generation" could refer to the Jewish race (render 'this race'), but I think it more probable that it refers to the generation that "sees all these things". To be more precise, I think that those who were alive on the planet in 1967 (when the city of Jerusalem returned to the political control of the nation Israel) are the generation in question.

[2] Jesus affirms that His words have eternal validity/authority.

[3] While He was walking this earth as Jesus, He didn't know, but presumably now He does.

[4] Since the Return draws ever closer, of necessity, we, of all people, should be doing this. A mere handful (0.6%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'pray' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[5] To whom does the 'all' refer? Those who are not followers of Christ will not pay attention in any case (presumably). It probably refers to His future followers.

[6] I take it that this statement settles the question of the exact day of the crucifixion. It was late Tuesday afternoon, probably about 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore, Jesus died on a Friday [not Thursday]. (See also Luke 23:54-24:1—Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon; then the women rested during the Sabbath [singular = just one day]; then early the first day of the week they went to the tomb.) For further discussion, please see: "How long was Jesus' body in the tomb?" on my website: www.prunch.org.

the poor!" And they started censuring her.[1] 6But Jesus said: "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done something useful to me. 7You will always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do them good; but you will not always have me. 8She did what she could.[2] She has perfumed my body for the burying before the fact. 9Assuredly I tell you, wherever this Gospel may be proclaimed throughout the whole world, what she has done will also be told as a memorial to her."[3]

Judas is hired

10Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, so as to betray Him to them.[4] 11Well upon hearing it they rejoiced and promised to give him silver coins.[5] So he started figuring how he might conveniently betray Him.

The upper room is made ready

12Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they would sacrifice the Paschal lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare, so that you may eat the Passover?" 13So He sent two of His disciples, saying to them: "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a clay jar of water; follow him. 14Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The teacher says, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' 15He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready; there prepare for us."[6] 16So His disciples set out and came into the city and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

The last night—begins Thursday evening, 04/04/30, and ends the next morning

17When it was evening He came with the twelve.

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[1] When Mary did it in her own house, only Judas complained. Now several others join in; it was getting to be too much of a good thing. See the footnote at verse 10 below.

[2] She did what was in her power to do. I would be happy to have that epitaph on my tombstone (if I ever have one) —'he did what he could'.

[3] Yes indeed; we are still reading about it, some 2,000 years later.

[4] It was too much for Judas. On Saturday (03-30-30) Mary of Bethany had anointed His feet with 300 denarii worth of the same perfume, and now four days later (Wed., 04-03-30) another woman anoints His head with another 300 denarii worth of perfume (that was a lot of money, and he liked money). In both cases Jesus affirms they are anointing Him for burial (and He had repeatedly told them He was going to be killed). Judas figured out that his expectation of an immediate kingdom was unfounded, and he rebelled. (He might even have convinced himself that Jesus had deceived him when He called him to be a disciple.)

[5] I follow the best line of transmission and 40% of the manuscripts in reading 'silver coins' rather than 'money'.

[6] This had obviously been prearranged. I suppose that this was the upper room that the disciples continued to use.

The traitor identified

18Now as they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, "Assuredly I tell you, one of you who is eating with me will betray me." 19So they began to be sorrowful and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" And another, "Surely not I?"[1] 20He answered and said to them: "It is one of the twelve, the one dipping with me in the bowl. 21The Son of the Man is indeed going just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of the Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man not to have been born."[2]

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper

22As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them and said, "Take, eat;[3] this is my body." 23Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank it. 24And He said to them: "This is my blood, that of the new[4] covenant, that is being shed for many. 25I tell you assuredly that I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."[5] 26And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter will deny Him

27Then Jesus said to them: "All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night,[6] because it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'[7] 28But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 29But Peter said to Him, "Even if all are caused to stumble, yet not I." 30Jesus said to him, "I tell you assuredly that <u>you</u>, today, this very night, before a rooster crows twice,[8]

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[1] Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'and another, surely not I' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). It would appear that no one thought of Judas (which surprises me).

[2] Praying to His Father, Jesus said: "Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). Judas was lost. But what are the implications of 'better not to have been born'? I suppose it means that it is better to have never existed, than to spend eternity in the Lake. I find this line of reasoning to be uncomfortable.

[3] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'eat' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] A small handful (0.6%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'new', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. Hebrews 8:7-10:18 clearly links the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 to the shed blood of God's Lamb.

[5] Jesus affirms that He will drink it in the Kingdom. I imagine this will be during the Millennial Reign, not in Heaven.

[6] Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'because of me this night' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] See Zechariah 13:7.

[8] For a full discussion of Peter's denials, harmonizing all four accounts, please see: How often did Jesus say Peter would deny Him? on my website. I argue that this is the fourth warning, and since Peter became increasingly belligerent and disrespectful, Jesus added a second crowing preceded by another three denials.

you will deny me three times." 31But he insisted even more vehemently, "If I have to die with you, I will absolutely not deny you!" And all the others said the same.

The agony in Gethsemane

32Then they came to a place that was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33But He took with Him Peter, James and John, and began to be greatly troubled and distressed. 34And He said to them: "My soul is overwhelmed with grief, to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch." 35Going on a little, He fell to the ground and started praying that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him. 36And He said: "*Abba* (Father), all things are possible to you. Please remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will." 37Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: "Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn't you keep watch for even one hour? 38Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39Again He went away and prayed, saying the same thing. 40And when He returned He found them sleeping again, because their eyes were being weighed down;[1] and they did not know how to answer Him. 41Then He came the third time and said to them: "You are still sleeping and resting! It is enough, the hour has come; yes, the Son of the Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42Get up, let's be going. See, my betrayer has approached."[2]

The betrayal and arrest

43And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him a considerable crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.[3] 44Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, he it is; seize him and take him away securely."[4] 45So upon arriving he went directly to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 46So they laid their hands on Him and secured Him. 47But a certain one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.[5] 48Then Jesus reacted by saying to them: "You have come out with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a bandit.

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[1] The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by whom? I follow some 35% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading 'were being weighed down', rather than 'had been weighed down', as in the rest.

[2] There may have been pauses between the statements.

[3] John 18:12 informs us that there was a 'chiliarch' present (a commander of 1,000 soldiers). An officer of such high rank could only be there by the Governor's order (Pilate). Subsequent events make clear that Pilate had been consulted, and had agreed to play along.

[4] Why the 'securely'? Judas had seen so many manifestations of Jesus' power that he should have known better, but of course he was under Satan's control at that time. However, it appears that they expected resistance.

[5] We know from Luke 22:51 that Jesus immediately healed the ear—otherwise things could have gotten nasty.

49I was with you daily in the temple, teaching, and you did not seize me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50Then they all deserted Him and ran away.[1]

A curious case

51Now a certain young man had followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. The young men grabbed him, 52so leaving the linen cloth he fled from them naked.[2]

At Caiaphas' house

53They led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. 54Well Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the operatives and warming himself at the fire.

A farcical trial

55Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus so as to kill Him, but were not finding any. 56To be sure, many were testifying falsely against Him, but their statements did not agree. 57Then some stood up and started testifying falsely against Him, saying, 58"We heard him saying: 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" 59But not even then did their testimony agree.[3]

60Then the high priest stood up in the center and questioned Jesus, saying: "Are you not going to answer? What are these testifying against you?" 61But He remained silent and answered nothing.[4] Again the high priest questioned Him and said to Him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"[5] 62So Jesus said: "I am, and you will see the Son of the Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of the heaven!"[6] 63Then the high priest tore his clothes and said: "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64You heard the blasphemy![7] What do you think?" They all condemned Him to be deserving of death. 65Then some began to spit on Him, to cover His face, punch Him and say to Him,

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1 Mark's account is brief. The parallel accounts fill in the picture of what actually happened.

2 Now why would Mark want to include an incident like this in his account? (None of the others do.) I rather imagine that he was that young man. Although not invited to the Passover, he probably waited outside and followed them to Gethsemane. In effect he is saying, "I was there."

3 It was indeed false testimony, since that was not what Jesus said. But even if He had said that, it would just be stupid, not criminal. They were desperate.

4 It was so obviously a farce that no answer was required.

5 This was an illegal proceeding on the part of the priest: he was asking Jesus to testify against Himself. The priest was desperate.

6 Wow! Jesus gave him more than he asked for! But how and when will those men, certainly lost, "see the Son of the Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of the heaven"? They will still be in Hades when Christ returns. Will those in Hades be able to see what goes on outside? I don't have an answer.

7 Wait a minute! How could the truth be blasphemy? They rejected the truth.

"Prophesy!"[1] And the operatives started slapping Him.

Peter's denials

66Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. **67**And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Natsarene!" **68**But Peter denied, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out into the entryway, and a rooster crowed.[2] **69**But that servant girl saw him again and began to say to those standing by, "This guy is one of them." **70**But again he kept denying it. Again, after a little while, those who were standing by said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them; because you really are a Galilean, and your accent agrees!"[3] **71**Then he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you are speaking!" **72**And for the second time a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered[4] the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." He broke down and started to cry.

Crucifixion Day—Friday, 04/05/30 AD

15 **1**As soon as it was early morning, having already formed a plan, the chief priests with the elders and scribes, indeed the whole council, bound Jesus, led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.[5]

Jesus before Pilate

2Pilate asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" So in answer He said to him, "You stated a fact!" **3**But the chief priests kept accusing Him of many things. **4**So Pilate asked Him again, saying: "Are you not going to answer? See how many things they are testifying against you!" **5**But Jesus still gave no answer, so that Pilate marveled.[6]

Barabbas

6Now at the feast he would release to them one prisoner, whomever they would request. **7**Well there was one called Barabbas, who had been bound with his fellow insurrectionists, who in the insurrection had committed murder. **8**Then the crowd began to call out[7] and request that he

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[1] They wanted Him to say who had hit Him. What they were doing was really cowardly, but they were probably under demonic influence.

[2] Nine Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, against 1,623 (according to *TuT*), omit "and a rooster crowed", to be followed by NIV and NASB (with their usual misleading footnotes).

[3] Around 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'and your accent agrees', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[4] But only after the Lord looked at him and broke the spell (Luke 22:61).

[5] And just why was Pilate dressed and waiting for them at 5:30 in the morning? Obviously this was a put-up job. Pilate knew it was a farce, but he soon found himself in over his head. For a detailed analysis concerning Pilate, please see: Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time, on my website: www.prunch.org.

[6] Jesus simply did not look or act like a criminal.

[7] A mere handful [0.5%] of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'go up' instead of 'call out', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

do just as he always did for them. 9So Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" 10(He knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.) 11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should release Barabbas to them instead. 12Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do to him you call 'king of the Jews'?" 13Again they shouted, "Crucify him!" 14But Pilate said to them, "But what evil did he do?" They just yelled all the louder, "Crucify him!" 15So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them, and Jesus, after a flogging, he handed over to be crucified.[1]

Soldiers have a little 'fun'

16Then the soldiers led Him away into the courtyard (that is, the Praetorium) and assembled the whole garrison. 17They clothed Him with purple, plaited a crown of thorns and put it on Him, 18and began to 'acclaim' Him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19They kept hitting Him on the head with a rod[2] and spitting on Him, and kneeling down they would 'worship' Him. 20When they had ridiculed Him, they took the purple off Him and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

The crucifixion

21A certain passer-by, Simon a Cyrenian (the father of Alexander and Rufus),[3] coming in from the countryside, was compelled to carry His cross.[4] 22They brought Him to a place *Golgotha*, which is translated, 'Place of a Skull'. 23They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh to drink,[5] but He did not take it. 24After crucifying Him, they divided His clothes by casting lots for them, to see who would take what. 25It was the third hour[6] when they crucified Him. 26The statement of His 'crime' that had been written was:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27With Him they also crucified two bandits, one on His right and one on His left. 28So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."[7]

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1 By comparing the parallel accounts we know that a great deal more happened than is given here.

2 This drove the thorns into His scalp, and since they were probably poisonous, His face began to swell.

3 After carrying the cross, Simon doubtless stayed around to see what happened. In consequence he was no doubt converted, as were his two sons.

4 A condemned person usually had to carry his cross, but this one was doubtless heavy, and evidently Jesus was having difficulty carrying it.

5 This was a humanitarian gesture—myrrh is a crude analgesic and would deaden the pain. But Jesus refused it; He wanted nothing to cloud His senses or diminish the suffering.

6 Using Jewish time, that was 9 a.m.

7 See Isaiah 53:12. Around 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 28 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.

29Those who passed by kept ridiculing Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Hey! You who can destroy the temple and build it in three days, **30**save yourself and come down from the cross!" **31**Similarly, the chief priests, with the scribes, kept mocking among themselves saying: "He saved others; he can't save himself![1] **32**Let the Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe him."[2] Those who were crucified with Him insulted Him as well.[3]

33Now when the sixth hour had come [noon], darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.[4] **34**At the ninth hour Jesus called out strongly, saying, "*Eloi, Eloi,*[5] *lima sabachthani*?" which is translated, "O God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"[6] **35**When some of the bystanders heard it they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." **36**Then someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a reed and started offering it to Him to drink, saying: "You let him be! 'Let's see if Elijah is coming to take him down'!"[7]

37Then Jesus gave a loud shout and breathed out His spirit;[8] **38**and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.[9] **39**Well when the centurion, who was standing opposite Him, saw that He breathed

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1 This was precisely true, but not in the sense they intended. To save us, He could not save Himself.

2 They were lying; they would not have submitted to Him even then.

3 But one of them changed his mind later.

4 The darkness could not have been a solar eclipse, as some have ignorantly argued. The Passover always occurs at full moon, and a solar eclipse only occurs at new moon. Further, even a total eclipse only lasts for a few minutes, not three hours.

5 Matthew has "Eli, Eli", which is Hebrew and is doubtless what Jesus actually said. Matthew wrote for Jews, and would naturally use Hebrew. Mark has "Eloi, Eloi", which is Aramaic. Mark wrote for a Roman audience and Aramaic was more widely known than Hebrew. Hebrew was spoken only by Jews, and not even by all of them.

6 See Psalm 22:1.

7 To understand Mark's turn of phrase, we need Matthew's account (27:47-49). "Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, 'This man is calling for Elijah!' Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, 'Let him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save him'." The 'let him' is 2nd person singular. But in Mark's account, the 'let him' is 2nd person plural! How do we reconcile the two accounts? I suggest the following: First, the man was quite possibly Mark himself; next, anyone who really understood the language would know that Jesus had not called Elijah; so, he responds sarcastically to their erroneous interpretation and therefore unreasonable demand that he stop; he retorts, "You stop!" and repeats their interpretation in disgust.

8 Both Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30 plainly state that Jesus dismissed His spirit. It was not the cross that killed Him [see the third note down]. As He Himself said in John 10:18, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He chose to die so that we might live. Thank you, Lord!

9 That veil represented the barrier between sinful man and a Holy God. For it to be ripped in two **from top to bottom** was obviously a supernatural event, and it followed immediately upon Jesus' death—which means that the Father considered that Jesus

out His spirit after giving such a loud shout,[1] he said, "This man really was God's Son!"[2]

40There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome—41they used to follow Him and minister to Him when He was in Galilee—and many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem.

The burial

42Now when evening had come, because it was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), 43Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member who also himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God, came and boldly went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44Well Pilate was surprised that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion he asked him when He had died.[3] 45Upon the centurion's confirmation he granted the body to Joseph. 46Having bought linen, he took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen and laid Him in a tomb that had been cut out of rock; then he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.[4] 47Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was placed.[5]

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had solved the problem. Hebrews 10:20 makes the connection. Because of Jesus' death we can now have access to the Father.

[1] A mere handful (0.4%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'after giving a loud shout', to be followed by NASB and LB.

[2] Any centurion would be a hardened soldier, who had seen no end of crucifixions. He knew that a cross killed by asphyxiation. Hanging from the hands, with the arms stretched out, pushes the diaphragm against the lungs so you can't breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure to prolong the agony—even though painful, the victim would push up so he could get a breath, until finally too worn out to do so. Breaking the legs would put an end to that expedient, and the person died within a few minutes, asphyxiated. Someone who is dying asphyxiated does not shout. Since Jesus gave a loud shout, but then immediately died, the centurion knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the cross had not killed Jesus (later, when Joseph asks for the body, Pilate is surprised that Jesus could already be dead). But who can just tell his spirit to leave? Putting two and two together, the centurion concluded that Jesus was a supernatural being. Just so!

[3] As soon as Jesus died, the centurion most probably had left the scene, going back to headquarters. He probably felt he should inform Pilate about the unusual events, but somehow Joseph got ahead of him. Well, Joseph was evidently primed for action; watching from a distance, as soon as Jesus dismissed His spirit Joseph headed for Pilate.

[4] If he rolled it, it was in the form of a wheel; there would be a track in which it rolled, with a bit of incline, so that he and Nicodemus could roll it down into place, where it would stop; but it would take several men to roll it back up and away (16:3-4). Obviously all of this had been planned and prepared in advance—the donkey owner, the upper room owner, the sepulcher owner all knew in advance just what part they were to play.

[5] They had seen where Jesus was placed, but obviously had not looked in the tomb—there were 100 pounds of spices in there, with enough linen to tie it all in.

16 [1]Now when the Sabbath was past,[1] Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, in order to go and anoint Jesus.[2]

Resurrection Day—Sunday, 04/07/30 AD[3]

Women go to sepulcher

[2]Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.[4] [3]And they were saying among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" [4](because it was very large), but when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away! [5]Upon entering the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. [6]But he said to them: "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Natsarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He isn't here! See, the place where they laid Him. [7]But go, tell His disciples, also Peter:[5] 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.'" [8]Trembling and bewildered they went out and fled from the tomb; and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.[6]

Jesus appears to the Magdalene, first

[9]Having risen early on the first day of the week, Jesus[7] appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. [10]She went and reported to those who had been with Him, as they were mourning and weeping. [11]When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

Emmaus[8]

[12]After these things He appeared in a different form to two of them

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1 After 6 p.m. that Saturday, shops could do business.

2 I follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the manuscripts in reading 'Jesus', instead of 'Him'.

3 For a harmonization of the four Gospel accounts of events on Resurrection Day, please see: Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection, on my website.

4 The several accounts say that it was dawning, early dawn, still dark, but by the time they reached the tomb the sun had risen. There is no discrepancy: that garden is on the west side of a mountain, and so the tomb would be in shade, besides the shade of the trees. The women left the house while it was still dark, but by the time they reached the tomb, it was already day in the valley—but the tomb would still be in the shade.

5 Here we have a nice 'touch': Peter would be in the dumps, because he had denied Jesus, and might have wondered what his future in the group would be. That word from the angel would encourage him.

6 That is, they said nothing to the guards or anyone else on the way, until Jesus appeared to them (Matthew 28:9-10). After that they weren't afraid any more. [See the final footnote, at 16:20.]

7 I follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the manuscripts in reading 'Jesus', instead of 'He'.

8 We have no objective way to know if this was before or after the appearance to Peter—the second was to the women (Matthew 28:9-10).

as they were walking, going into the country. 13So they returned and reported to the rest; neither did they believe them.[1]

Jesus appears to the 'Eleven', fifth

14Later He appeared to the eleven[2] as they were reclining at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15Then He said to them: "Go to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. 16He who believed and was baptized will be saved;[3] but he who did not believe will be condemned. 17And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new languages; 18they will remove 'snakes';[4] and if they drink anything

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[1] Mark is writing for a Roman audience, so he emphasizes that the disciples did not gullibly believe, just because they wanted to. Just the opposite.

[2] Strictly speaking, there were only ten disciples there, Thomas being absent. Apparently 'the eleven' came to be used as a title for the group.

[3] The only baptism that can save is when Jesus baptizes someone with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16). But how and when does Jesus baptize us with the Holy Spirit? He does it from His position at the Father's right hand, when we believe into Him. At that point the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in us, and has a great deal to do with our 'new man' or 'new nature'. For a fuller discussion, please see "Baptisms in the Bible" on my website, www.prunch.org.

[4] The NIV renders 'they will pick up snakes with their hands', the 'with their hands' being based on just over 2% of the Greek manuscripts. I would say that this particular statement of the Lord's has been generally misunderstood. The verb in question covers a wide semantic area, one of the uses being to pick up the way a garbage man picks up a bag of trash—he does so to get rid of it (hence 'remove'). I believe Luke 10:19 sheds light on this question. In Luke 10:19 the Lord Jesus said: "Behold, I <u>give</u> [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts] you **the** authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of <u>the</u> enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The Lord is addressing the Seventy, not the Twelve, and others were doubtless present; further, this was said perhaps four months before His death and resurrection. It follows that this authority is not limited to the apostles, and there is no indication of a time limit. The Lord Jesus affirms that He gives us **the** authority over all the power of the enemy. In Matthew 28:18 He declares that He holds "all authority… in heaven and earth", and so He has the right and the competence to delegate a portion of that authority to us. We may have any number of enemies, but <u>the</u> enemy is Satan. The phrase, "all the power", presumably includes his works, followed by their consequences.

Returning to Luke 10:19, the Lord gives us the authority to "trample snakes and scorpions". Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you don't need power from on High, just a slipper (if you're fast you can do it barefoot). To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove 'snakes', they will place hands on the sick. ("If they drink…" is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by 'snakes'?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the 'snakes' must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a 'brood of vipers', and in 23:33, 'snakes, brood of vipers'. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil". And 1 John 3:10 makes

deadly, it will not hurt them at all;[1] they will lay hands on sick people, and they will get well."[2]

The Ascension

19So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at God's right. **20**And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the message by the accompanying signs. Amen.[3]

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clear that Satan has many other 'sons'. In Revelation 20:2 we read: "He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years." If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our 'snakes' are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the 'snakes' in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the 'scorpions'? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well include their offspring, the humanoids [see my paper, "In the Days of Noah"]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is done.

[1] All the other 'signs' involve volitional participation on the part of a believer, but this one presumably refers to an enemy taking advantage of one's trust or good faith and putting poison in one's drink. I suggest that the Lord was enunciating a principle here that we can claim. Whenever we feel that someone has tried / is trying to harm us, taking advantage of our confidence, we can claim the nullifying of the attempt, based on this promise.

[2] Jesus did not say that each believer will do all these things, but any Christian community should be able to do them all.

[3] For well over a hundred years, there has been an ongoing campaign to discredit the last twelve verses of Mark (16:9-20). I wonder where people get the motivation to expend so much time and energy on such an enterprise. Only three known Greek manuscripts omit the verses, and one of them is a falsification at this point [there would be no point in a falsification unless the first hand in fact contained the verses]. For a full discussion of this variant, please see "Mark 16:9-20 and the doctrine of Inspiration" on my website.

Around 50% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have a colophon that says, "published ten years after the Ascension of Christ". For 50% of the manuscripts to have this probably means that the tradition is ancient. If this information is correct, Mark's Gospel was turned over to the public ('published') in 40 AD.