



**THE EARLY
TEACHINGS OF
JESUS CHRIST**
The Good News
told by Mark

**A Bible Teaching Commentary
for personal or group study
by Fred Morris**



**Mark Part 1
Chapters 1 to 8**

THE GOOD NEWS BY MARK: The Early Teachings of Jesus

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ◆ The Baptism of Jesus. | ◆ The Compassion of Jesus |
| ◆ The Disciples of Jesus | ◆ The Parables of Jesus |
| ◆ The Miracles of Jesus | ◆ Deliverance from Evil Spirits |

IN THIS BOOK, Mark tells about the early days of the ministry of Jesus on earth. It tells about His teachings and His healings. It tells us what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It builds our faith to do His work. It prepares us for the ministry of Jesus today. This is the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He came to forgive sins and change lives forever.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS supply Bible commentaries written by Fred Morris. For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing and selling wherever there was a need for basic Christian teaching.

THIS EDITION is written in easy-to-read Worldwide English which will add understanding and also speed up translation into other languages. It gives basic teaching for all readers plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS are to use on your own or to study in a group. They will teach you God's truth. They will help you to know God's Son, Jesus Christ. They will help you to talk about your faith in God. They will enable the Holy Spirit of God to guide you from going the wrong way in life. They will tell you how you can live a life that is pleasing to God.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you read the Bible and use these commentaries.

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'The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you' (Mark 4:11)

CONTENTS

To the Reader or Leader	5
INTRODUCTION	6
WHAT DID MARK WRITE ABOUT JESUS?	7
What the Old Testament says about Jesus	7
Jesus: fully God and fully man	8
THE FIRST DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH	9
KING HEROD TRIES TO KILL THE BABY JESUS	9
Mark 1:1–20	10
JOHN THE BAPTISER PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS	10
Elijah, John and Jesus	11
JOHN BAPTISES JESUS	12
The temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:3–9	13
THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS	13
JESUS CALLS TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM	14
Names that Mark gave to Jesus	14
Mark 1:21–28	15
JESUS BEGINS TO TEACH AND TO HEAL	15
Mark 1:29–45	16
PETER INVITES JESUS HOME	16
JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY	17
Mark Chapter 2	18
JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO COULD NOT WALK	18
JESUS MAKES FRIENDS WITH SINNERS	19
JESUS SHOWS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS	19
JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH	20
Mark Chapter 3	21
JESUS HEALS A MAN ON THE SABBATH	21
JESUS TEACHES THE TWELVE DISCIPLES	21

The Sabbath and Sunday worship	22
THE POWER OF GOD OVER SATAN	22
JESUS AND HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS	23
Mark Chapter 4	24
THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE SEED	24
MORE PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD	26
Teaching truth with parables	26
THE DISCIPLES CROSS A LAKE DURING A STORM	27
Mark Chapter 5	28
JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO A MAN WITH DEMONS	28
THE FAITH OF A WOMAN & A SYNAGOGUE LEADER	29
Mark Chapter 6	31
NO FAITH AT NAZARETH	31
JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES	32
HOW HEROD KILLED JOHN THE BAPTISER	32
JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND	33
JESUS WALKS ON WATER	33
Mark Chapter 7	34
THE TEACHINGS OF THE JEWISH LEADERS	34
A FOREIGN WOMAN SHOWS FAITH IN JESUS	35
JESUS HEALS A DEAF AND DUMB MAN	36
Mark Chapter 8	37
JESUS FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND	37
THOSE WITH LITTLE FAITH, NO FAITH OR GREAT FAITH	37
PETER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST	38
THE WAY OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS	38
THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR FOLLOWERS OF JESUS	39
WARNINGS FROM JESUS	40
Spreading the Good News	41
CONCLUSIONS	41

To the Reader or Leader

These Bible commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



Now read this: Where you see this sign, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading the words in this book.



Talk about this: Where you see this sign, there are questions that can be asked in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.



Think about this: Where you see this sign, the question requires more time and personal meditation.



Ruled teaching boxes: Where you see this sign, the information inside provides extra information at the time the Bible was written and for today's believers.

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MARK Part One: Chapters 1-8

INTRODUCTION

The Good News from God written by Mark is usually known as the Gospel of Mark. It is one of four gospels in the Bible about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. These gospels are the first four books of the New Testament part of the Bible.



The origins of the Old and New Testaments

The Jewish Hebrew holy books became the Old Testament part of the Christian Bible. The first five teaching books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were given by God to Moses. The later parts of the Old Testament contain history, prophecy, poetry and books about famous people who walked with God. Many of these books speak clearly of Jesus, the coming Messiah. The early Christian believers studied the Old Testament teachings.

During this early period of the Christian church, three disciples, Matthew, Mark and John, wrote gospels. They were Jewish believers in Jesus. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke. He was not a Jew. He also wrote the history of the early church, the Acts of the Apostles. These and other books and letters became the New Testament part of the Bible.

The Old and New Testaments were used for the many Bible translations we have today. Christians believe that both the Old and New Testament books are the inspired word of God.

A young follower of Jesus named John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. He wrote it several years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

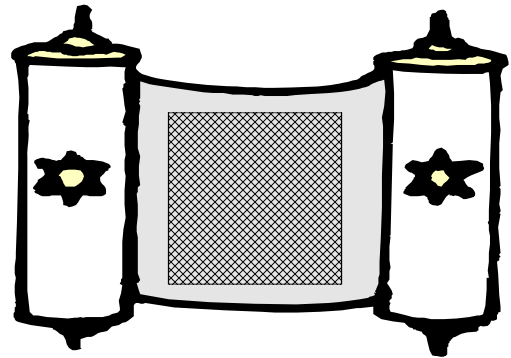
Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mark went with Paul and Barnabas to tell the Good News of Jesus in Turkey. But then he left them and went back home to Jerusalem. Paul did not want to take Mark on his next preaching trip. Barnabas took Mark with him and they went to Cyprus. Later, Paul and Mark became friends again.

Mark believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Note that Jesus often called Himself the Son of Man. God Himself spoke twice from Heaven to say that Jesus was His Son (Mark 1:11; 9:7). The title Son of Man proves that the Son of God lived as a man for 33 years. It also reminded the Jews that an Old Testament prophecy said the Messiah would come as a Son of Man (Daniel 7:13–14).

WHAT DID MARK WRITE ABOUT JESUS?

These first eight chapters of the Gospel of Mark tell us about the early part of the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus. The Gospel or Good News is that God loves us and He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve for our sins, so that we can be saved. He is our Saviour. All people everywhere who worship the Lord God Almighty and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can be forgiven. Paul later wrote, 'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9). They will have everlasting life with God and Jesus in Heaven.

Mark listened much to Peter speak about Jesus and about what He did. The young Mark watched and believed that Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah. For a very long time, the Jews had been waiting for this great leader promised by God. Mark wrote these things down on a scroll.



What the Old Testament (OT) says about Jesus

And how the promises came true in the New Testament (NT)

Here are just a few references by Mark to the fulfilment of OT promises:

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ), the Son of God, our Saviour. (OT: Isaiah 53:12; Jeremiah 23:5. NT: Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:11; Luke 2:11; Hebrews 7:25.)
2. Jesus is the promised healer. (OT: Isaiah 35:5,6; NT: Mark 2:12; 7:35; 8:25.)
3. God promised to send a shepherd to care for His sheep. (OT: Ezekiel 34:23. NT: Mark 6:34.)
4. God promised that a messenger would come to prepare the way for Jesus (OT: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1. NT: Mark 1:2-3.)
5. God spoke from Heaven to bless the ministry of Jesus. (OT: Isaiah 42:1. NT: Mark 1:11.)
6. Jesus moved to the region of Galilee to teach the people. (OT: Isaiah 9:1, 2. NT: Matthew 4:13,14, Mark 3:7.)
7. Many of His own people refused to believe that Jesus was God. (OT: Isaiah 6:9-10; 53:3; NT: Mark 4:12; 6:3-4; John 1:11.)

There are nearly 500 references in the New Testament from the Old Testament. In the Gospel of Mark there are over 50 OT references.

In this first part of the Gospel of Mark, we read about the work that Jesus did when he had reached the age of 30. This was the age when a Jewish man was allowed to teach. Jesus came to do the work of God, His Father. He healed the sick (2:1–12). He raised the dead (5:42). He told demon spirits to leave people (5:8-13). He fed the hungry (Mark 8:1–13). These miracles were signs that showed Jesus came from God.

Mark wanted us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Good News that God will forgive our sins if we repent and believe in His Son and His sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

The Bible says that all people have sinned (Romans 3:23). We are born full of sin, so God sent His Son to cleans us from that sin. The greatest thing that Jesus did was to die for us. We deserve to be punished for our sins. But Jesus was born without sin. He did not deserve to die. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to die for us, in our place. If we are sorry for our sins and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we can be forgiven and live with Him forever. These things were promised in the Old Testament part of the Bible, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

The name Jesus means Salvation, or Saviour. The Hebrew name for Christ is Messiah, which means the Anointed One or Messenger of God. God is the Lord God Almighty whom Jews and Christians worship. Christians believe that He is Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ. God sent His Son Jesus as Saviour to the Jews and to the rest of the world.



Jesus: fully God and fully man

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God in human form. He is fully God, created by a miracle of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He was fully human, knowing the same feelings we know, but without sin. God chose to come into the world that He made by being born as a baby. Jesus was born as a son to Mary. The Holy Spirit of God planted the seed into the virgin Mary. Jesus was fully God in Heaven and He became fully man when born to Mary. He is called 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man'.

Jesus therefore showed us what God is really like and He told us the truth from God. He knew what is in the heart of God His Father.

Paul wrote these words in Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT): 'Though he was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to... When he appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died the death of a criminal on a cross.' Mary gave birth to God's own Son who died as the punishment for our sins. Jesus is the promised Christ or Messiah. He is willing to save from their sins all people who believe that He is the Son of God. He will return one day soon to meet all who believe in Him.

Jesus, the Son of God, was born into the world through the Holy Spirit. He was born to a Jewish virgin girl called Mary. Her husband was Joseph. This miracle birth happened 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. Jesus, therefore, was born and brought up as a Jewish boy.

THE FIRST DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH

Matthew, Luke and John also wrote their own books of the Good News about Jesus. Their gospels and the Gospel of Mark are the first books in the New Testament. Matthew and Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus. Mark and John do not tell us about these things in their books.

Roman armies were in control of Israel when Jesus was born. Caesar Augustus, in Rome, sent the order to his soldiers in Israel telling all the Jews to sign their names on a list (Luke 2:1). He wanted to count how many Jews lived in Israel. To do this the Jews had to travel to the home town of their parents. Joseph and Mary travelled together from Nazareth to Bethlehem to sign their names on the list.

Mary knew from the angel Gabriel that she was pregnant (Luke 1:26-38). An angel told Joseph that this baby was a miracle from God (Matthew 1:18-25).

It was while they were in Bethlehem that Jesus was born. Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He was the Son of God from the Holy Spirit. Jesus, therefore, was born without sin in His life.

Local shepherds were told where to find and worship the baby Jesus (Luke 2:12). A vision of angels from God told them of this wonderful miracle. God wanted the ordinary people to know about the birth of His Son in Bethlehem. He was the promised Messiah, or Christ.

KING HEROD TRIES TO KILL THE BABY JESUS

At this time, King Herod ruled over Israel, which was controlled by Rome. He was a very cruel king. Important men from the East went to Herod. They were looking for the new King of the Jews in Israel. They had followed a new star in the sky (Matthew 2:2). Herod asked the religious leaders to tell him where to find the new king. They read what the prophet Micah said in the Old Testament. The Jewish Christ or Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

The men from the East found the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. But Herod did not want a Jew to become king in his place. So he killed all the babies in

Bethlehem who were under two years old (Matthew 2:16).

An angel told Mary and Joseph to escape to Egypt with the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:13). The angel of God later guided them back to Nazareth (Matthew 2:22,23). This was the town where Jesus lived until He was 30 years old. People who lived there thought He was the son of Joseph, a carpenter and builder.

Jesus became wiser as He grew older (Luke 2:52) but many people could not believe that He was the Son of God. However, the prophet Simeon said that Jesus came to bring the light of God to non-Jews and Jews (Luke 2:32). The prophetess Anna said that Jesus was the Saviour and Redeemer that everyone had been waiting for (Luke 2:38). Many believed that Jesus was their Messiah and would set Israel free from the Roman kings.



Talk about this :

1. What did the following people think about the birth of Jesus: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds in Bethlehem, King Herod, the royal men from the East, Simeon and Anna?
2. What do you think about the birth of Jesus? Who do you believe Jesus is?



Now read this: Mark 1:1–20

JOHN THE BAPTISER PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS

In the first 13 verses of the Gospel of Mark, we read about:

- John the Baptist, the prophet who preached in the desert (1:4).
- Jesus, the Son of God, who came from heaven (1:9).
- God, the Holy Spirit, who came upon Jesus and guided Him (1:10, 12).
- God, the Father, who spoke from heaven (1:11).
- Satan, who came to tempt Jesus (1:13).
- The angels who helped Jesus (1:13).

The book of Luke also tells us about the birth of John the Baptist. He was born six months earlier than Jesus to Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary (Luke 1:5–24; 57–66). His birth was also a miracle of God because his mother was too old to have babies (1:7,13). But he was not the Son of God. He was the son of Zechariah. Mark tells us all about the plan of God for John.

John the Baptist dressed like an Old Testament prophet of God. He lived like Elijah and spoke messages from God (Mark 1:6). He fulfilled the

prophecies that Malachi and Isaiah gave 700 years before the birth of Jesus. They spoke about hearing the voice of a messenger calling "Prepare the way for the Lord!" (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3).

Mark used the words of these prophets to tell us about John (Mark 1:2,3). John was the messenger sent by the Lord God Almighty to prepare the way for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was not a disciple of Jesus. There was another man called John who became a disciple of Jesus.

God filled John the Baptist with His Holy Spirit even before he was born (Luke 1:13,41). John came to warn people not to keep on sinning. He prepared the way for Jesus their Messiah. 'John baptised people in the desert. He preached that people should be baptised and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them' (Mark 1:4).



Elijah, John and Jesus

At the time of John the Baptist, Israel waited for the promised Messiah, the Anointed One of God. For over 400 years there was no word from God through His prophets. The people believed that Elijah would come back to prepare the way for Messiah. The prophet Malachi had promised this (Malachi 4:5). So the people believed the Old Testament that someone would come to prepare the way for God's Messiah. There was much excitement in Israel when John came dressed as Elijah and lived in the desert. He ate simple food in the same way as Elijah. John did not preach in Jerusalem. The people went to listen to him near the River Jordan. John told them that they should repent and be baptised. John was the promised messenger for the promised Messiah. He knew that Jesus would save Israel and the world from sin if they believed He is the Son of God.

When people said that they were sorry for the wrong things they had done, John baptised them. He put them under the water and brought them up again. This showed everyone that they had repented. To repent means that we are sorry for our sins. It means that we want to turn from our sins and obey God. Our sins are everything wrong that we think, say or do. We also sin when we fail to obey God and fail to do the good things that He wants. Sin separates us from God. Baptism is a way of showing that God has washed away our old sinful lives and we are making a fresh, clean start with Him.

God had promised to deliver the people of Israel from their enemies and to bless them again. God had promised to send a Saviour, or Messiah. Many prophets in the Old Testament spoke of this. For 400 years there was no special prophet from God. Then John the Baptist came.

All the people from Jerusalem and the region of Judea came to listen to

him. The prophet John was not the Messiah. John told the people about Jesus. He said that someone very important was coming. "I will baptise you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (1:7,8).

JOHN BAPTISES JESUS

Jesus came from Galilee to the River Jordan and John baptised Him (1:9; Matthew 3:13; John 1:32-34). Jesus did not have to repent, for He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). John baptised Jesus because it was the right thing to do (Matthew 3:15). It was the plan of God and it was right to show this to others. It was the plan of God for John and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

John came to prepare the way for the work of Jesus. When Jesus came up out of the water, John heard and saw three great miracles (Mark 1:10-11):

1. Heaven opened up.
2. The Holy Spirit came down gently to rest on Jesus.
3. God spoke from Heaven.

The voice of God said: "This is My Son, and I love Him. I am very pleased with Him" (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He was at the beginning of time with His Father God and will be at the end of time. Christians believe in one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is why our God is called the Holy Trinity. Trinity means three in one.

John knew and believed that Jesus was the Son of God. John baptised in water as a sign of repentance and the forgiveness of sins (1:4). John said that Jesus "will baptise you with the Holy spirit (1:8).



When John baptised Jesus (1:9) there was no need for Jesus to confess His sins for:

- Jesus was born without sin and had no sin (Hebrews 4:15)
- Jesus was and is the Son of God (Mark 1:1)
- Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit (1:10-11).

After the baptism of Jesus,

He was sent away by the Holy Spirit to be tested by Satan for 40 days (1:13; Matthew 4:3–9.) His baptism and testing were the beginning of the ministry of Jesus on earth.



The temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:3–9

- First Satan tried to make Jesus doubt Himself. “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man does not live on bread only. He lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
- Then Satan tempted Jesus to jump off a cliff and let God’s angels save Him. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”
- Finally Satan tempted Jesus to accept an earthly kingdom instead of the Kingdom of God. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13: “Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.”

We must never forget that Jesus, the Son of God, came to live on earth as a human being. He was tempted, in the same way as us:

- We are tempted to deny our faith in the Lord God Almighty.
- We are tempted to do things in our own strength.
- We are tempted to want the things of this world.

Jesus used His knowledge of the Old Testament against Satan. This is a good example to us all. Satan also knew and quoted the Old Testament, but he used it in the wrong way. We must not listen to people who use the Bible for their own purpose in a wrong way. This is why we should read the whole Bible and know it well.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS

John the Baptist called the Jews to repent and believe in Jesus their Messiah. We repent when we are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For hundreds of years, the Jewish people had looked for their Messiah. The people wanted a leader who would save them from the power of their enemies. God wanted the people to turn back to Him so He could save them from their sins.

The Old Testament tells us that many messengers of God had been killed when they warned the Jews to repent. The Jewish prophets also told of

God's Anointed One or Messiah who would come and save them. This Saviour would come to save all peoples, the Jews and non-Jews. This Saviour was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Saviour today.

JESUS CALLS TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM

When John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus started to preach in Galilee (1:14). This is a region of Israel to the north of Jerusalem. Jesus gave three reasons to preach the Good News from God. "The time has come," He said. "The Kingdom of God is near. Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News" (1:15).

Jesus saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were throwing a fish net into a lake called the Sea of Galilee (1:16). Jesus called to them, "Come and follow Me!" He wanted to teach them about the Kingdom of God. Note that Jesus called ordinary working men to follow him.

At once the fishermen stopped fishing and followed Jesus. It is important to accept the call of Jesus immediately and to follow Him in faith. He gave these men a promise. "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men" (1:17). They would bring people to Jesus to save them from their sins. They would catch people, not fish, for the Kingdom of God.

Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptist. He left John and followed Jesus. Then Andrew went back to his brother Simon and told him,

"We have found the Messiah" (John 1:40,41).

Simon believed Jesus was the Messiah, and became one of His closest disciples. Later on, Jesus said to Simon, "Your name will be Peter." It means a rock (John 1:42).

Jesus also called Philip to follow Him. Philip then asked



Names that Mark gave to Jesus

- Jesus the Christ or Messiah (1:1; 8:29)
- Son of God (1:1; 3:11; 5:7)
- Lord (1:3; 2:28; 7:28)
- Son of Man (2:28 and 8:31)



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athanael to meet Jesus. These men became disciples of Jesus (John 1:43-48).

Nathanael said to Jesus, "You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Jesus then confirmed who He was by speaking about the angels of God (John 1:51). Only the Son of God could know the angels of God personally.

There were 12 disciples who gave up everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus was now ready to teach His disciples. He also taught others who wanted to listen to the Good News. He taught them about the Kingdom of God and about the plan of His heavenly Father to save sinners.



Talk about this:

1. What did John the Baptist come to do (1:4,8)?
2. What did John ask people before he baptised them (1:4)? What does it mean to repent?
3. What did God the Father say about Jesus (1:11)?
4. How did Satan try to spoil the plan of God for Jesus (1:13)?
5. What truths does Mark tell us about Jesus in 1:1,7,8,11?
7. What type of people did Jesus choose for His disciples (1:16-20)?
8. What did Jesus mean, "I will make you fishers of men" (1:17)?



Think about this:

How can we prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus today? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus (1:17-20)?



Now read this: Mark 1:21–28

JESUS BEGINS TO TEACH AND TO HEAL

Jesus went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum and taught the people (1:21). The synagogue was a Jewish religious meeting place. Their leaders read the Law of Moses to the people every Sabbath day. 'Then Jesus began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching. He taught them as one who had authority' (1:21-22).

Satan could not destroy the Word of God but he made it difficult for Jesus to teach and to preach. The words of Jesus had so much power in them that

they made a man cry out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One of God" (1:24).

The man had an evil spirit in him, which made him speak in fear like this. Jesus knew that it was the evil spirit controlling him. Jesus told the spirit, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon spirit shook the man and came out of him with a scream. The people were amazed. They said, "He gives orders to evil spirits and they obey Him" (1:27).

'News about Jesus spread quickly all over Galilee' (1:28).



Now read this: Mark 1:29–45

PETER INVITES JESUS HOME

Capernaum was a town on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed there, at the house of Simon Peter. The mother of Peter's wife was sick. Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her to get up. Her fever left her immediately and she began to serve them (1:31). Jesus had the power of God in Him to do miracles. He healed the sick.

By the end of the day all the people in the city knew what had happened. They crowded around the door of the house of Peter (1:33). They brought sick people and those who had demon spirits to Jesus. Jesus healed them all. But He would not allow the demons to speak. He did not want demons to say who He was (1:34).

The ministry of Jesus was so popular that sometimes it was difficult for Him to teach. Early next morning He got up and left the house. It was still dark. He went to a place where He could be alone to pray (1:35).

Peter called the others and they went out to look for Jesus. He often got up early to pray while it was still dark. He talked to His Father in Heaven. Prayer kept Him in the power and will of God. It is important for us all to set aside a time for prayer in a quiet place. It is important to receive the guidance of our Lord God Almighty.

Peter found Jesus and told Him, "Everyone is looking for You" (1:37).

It was difficult for Jesus to teach the people. They wanted to see more miracles. Jesus replied, "Let us go to the nearby villages." Jesus did not let His success in one place stop Him from preaching elsewhere. He did not feel guilty about moving away to preach the Good News from God somewhere else. He said, "That is why I have come" (1:38).

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY

So Jesus and His disciples walked through all the region of Galilee. 'He preached in their synagogues. He also drove out demons' (1:39).

Jesus continued to heal sick people. A man who was sick with leprosy came to Him. It was a bad skin disease. He knelt down and begged Jesus to make his skin clean. People with leprosy had to live away from towns and villages. They were not allowed to touch anyone.

The man said, "If you are willing to make me clean, you can do it" (1:40).

Jesus was very sad for him. He put out His hand and touched him. He said, "I am willing. Be clean" (1:41). At once the man was healed. His skin was clean (1:42).

Then Jesus told him not to tell anyone. "Go and show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded" (1:44). The man had to do this to show that he was healed. It was a teaching from the Old Testament (Leviticus 1:45). After that, he could go back to his family. He did not have to live alone any more. He no longer needed to shout out, "Unclean! Unclean!" when people came near.

The man told everyone he met how he was healed. Soon, it was difficult for Jesus to go from place to place because of the crowds (1:45). They even followed Him into the desert.



Talk about this :

1. Why were the people surprised at the teaching of Jesus (1:22)?
2. What happened when evil spirits met Jesus (1:23-28)?
3. Why is it important to stop Satan and his demons from speaking out (1:34)?
4. Why did Jesus pray early in the day? Why is it important to find a quiet time and place to pray (1:35)?
5. Why did the man who was healed have to show himself to the priest (1:44)?
6. Why did Jesus move on to another place? Where did He preach? (1:38,39)?



Think about this:

What were the four parts to the ministry of Jesus (1:14-15,21,25,31)? What was the result of the ministry of Jesus (1:17,22,27-28,34)? Have you asked God to show you your own ministry of Jesus?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 2

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO COULD NOT WALK

Jesus went back to Capernaum in the Galilee region. Capernaum was a friendly town for Jesus at this time. Many people heard that He was there. They filled the house until there was no more room (2:2).

Jesus preached the truth from God to them because He Himself was the Word of God. He brought the truth from God to the world. He brought the Good News or Gospel of the love of God shown in Himself.

Houses in Israel were usually built with large stones. Some had flat roofs made of wood and dried mud or clay. You could walk on them. Some of the buildings had very simple roofs made of tree branches.

Four men carried their friend to the house where Jesus was teaching. He could not walk. They could not get inside, so they went up and removed part of the roof. Then they lowered their sick friend down on his mat to the feet of Jesus.

Faith in God often leads people to do brave things. People who have faith do great things because they are trusting in a great God. Jesus saw the faith of these four men. So He said to the sick man, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5).

Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses heard what Jesus said. They complained, "Only God can forgive sins" (2:7). Two thousand years ago, the Jews stoned people to death if they spoke against God (Leviticus 24:16). They did not understand the truth about Jesus and that God had sent Him into the world.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. So He said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" (2:9). He said this to show that He was Son of God as well as Son of Man. He had power and authority on earth to forgive sins (2:10). Today He is equal with the Lord God Almighty. God forgives sins in the name of His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of faith in Jesus.

Then Jesus healed the man. He said, "Get up. Take your mat and go home" (2:11).



JESUS MAKES FRIENDS WITH SINNERS

Everyone watched the man get up and go home. They praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (2:12).

Then Jesus went out and spoke to the crowd beside the Sea of Galilee. He wanted to more find men who would leave everything and follow Him. On this day He found Levi, a taxman, who was also called Matthew. Taxmen worked for the Roman government. The people did not like them because they were not honest. They collected taxes from the Jews and charged them too much money. However, Levi left his tax job and followed Jesus (2:14).

Levi invited Jesus and the other disciples to eat at his house. Some Jewish teachers of the Law who were Pharisees were there. They asked, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard them and said to them, "Those who are healthy do not need a doctor. People who are ill do need a doctor. I have not come to call those who think they are right with God to follow Me. I have come to call sinners to follow Me" (2:17). This is still the ministry of Jesus today. We are all sinners who need to follow Jesus.

Jesus wanted to help the people who needed the most help. He wanted to heal their souls as well as their bodies. These people welcomed Jesus but some of the religious leaders did not want to follow Jesus. They were looking for the Messiah but they did not want Jesus. This is why Jesus chose to work with people who would listen to Him. The hearts of many of the religious leaders were hard and their minds were closed.

JESUS SHOWS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS

The Pharisees thought that they were good people. They fasted, that is, they did not eat food for a time. They tried to obey all of the Law of God. God warns that all people are sinners. "There is no-one who does good, no-one at all" (Psalm 53:3). The apostle Paul repeats these same words. "No-one is right with God" (Romans 3:10).

The disciples of John were also fasting (Mark 2:18). The Jews fasted for many reasons:

- To show sorrow when someone had died (Psalm 35:13).
- To think more about God and less about food (Nehemiah 1:4).
- To help them keep the laws on special holy days (Leviticus 23:26-32).
- To spend more time in prayer for something important (Daniel 9:3).

Some people wanted to know why the disciples of Jesus were not fasting

(Mark 2:18). Jesus spoke about a Jewish wedding feast. Jewish brides and bridegrooms opened their houses for the guests to come in. The guests visited, ate well and were happy for the bridegroom and the bride. But when the bridegroom dies, they will be sad and stop eating food for that day. He said this because He would be with them for a short time and they would be happy. Later, He would be taken away and they would be sad. That would be the time when they could fast (2:20).

Jesus came to show the Jews a new and better way. Men, not God, made many of their religious traditions. They were afraid to change their ways.

Jesus gave them good advice (2:21-22):

1. Do not sew a new patch of cloth onto old cloth. It will tear and make the hole larger.
2. Do not pour new wine into old wineskins. It will burst the skins and be lost.

Jesus knew that some of the Jewish traditions did not mix well with the new life He offered to all people.

Jesus said that every teacher of the Old Testament law is like the owner of a house. He will bring out both old and new treasures from inside (Matthew 13:52). Jesus wanted people to follow Him. He wanted to save them from trusting in their religious traditions. The Holy Spirit will teach the followers of Jesus about these old and new ways. He will teach them what is from God and what is from men. Then the world will see Holy Spirit power at work to the glory of God.

JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

One day the Pharisees saw the disciples of Jesus picking and eating corn. It was a Sabbath day, God's seventh day of rest. They said to Jesus, "Look! It is against the Law to do this on the Sabbath. Why are your disciples doing it?" (Mark 2:24) He replied, "The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath" (2:27). The Sabbath was meant as a day of resting, joy and worship. It was not a day of fasting.

Jesus wanted to show mercy on the Sabbath, not sacrifice. He had authority to say this. He was Lord of the Sabbath (2:28).

Jesus reminded the Pharisees what God said in the Old Testament. "I want mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). Jesus told them, "You do not know what these words mean. If you did, you would not bring charges against those who are not guilty" (Matthew 12:7).



Talk about this:

1. Only God can forgive sins. Why did Jesus forgive the sins of the person who could not walk (2:10)?
2. Why were the Jewish religious leaders unhappy when Jesus had a meal with tax collectors (2:16)?
3. Why did Jesus say, "It is not healthy people who need a doctor" (2:17)?
4. What did Jesus teach about fasting (2:19-20,27)?
5. Why did Jesus teach about new cloth and new wine (2:21-22)?
6. What did Jesus teach about the Sabbath day of rest (2:19-20,27-28)?



Think about this:

Why did sinners follow Jesus? Should we make friends with non-believers?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 3

JESUS HEALS A MAN ON THE SABBATH

After this, some Pharisees looked for a way to find fault with Jesus (3:2). They watched carefully to see what He would do on the Sabbath day.

One Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue. He saw a man with a weak and twisted hand. He asked the man to stand up in front of everyone. Jesus asked him, "What does the Law say we should do on the Sabbath day? Should we do good or should we do evil? Should we save life or should we kill?" (3:4).

Jesus became angry because no-one answered Him. He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was healed (3:5). 'Then the Pharisees went out and began to make plans... to kill Jesus' (3:6).

Jesus was kind to the man with the weak and twisted hand. He was angry with the religious leaders because they were stubborn and hardhearted. He knew that it was right to do good things on the Sabbath day. It is God's seventh day of rest.

JESUS TEACHES THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee with His followers. Great numbers of people came from near and far away to hear Him (3:7-8). The people were pushing and crushing Jesus, so He stood in a boat on the lake and taught them. Voices can be heard a long way across water.



The Sabbath and Sunday worship

Sabbath means rest from work. God made the heavens and the earth in six days of work. He called the seventh day a Sabbath day (Genesis 2:3). Later, God gave laws to Moses. The Sabbath was made a holy day (Exodus 20:8–11). On the Sabbath, men and women rest from work to worship their Creator. Sadly, the Pharisees added their own rules for the Sabbath. They thought more about keeping their own Sabbath rules than they did about obeying the Law of God.

The Sabbath day is Saturday, the seventh day of the week. After the ascension of Jesus, His followers met for worship on the Sabbath. They met often to study the Old Testament and listen to the teachings of Jesus from His disciples (Acts 2:42). They also worshipped God together on Sundays, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). They did this to remember the resurrection day of the Lord Jesus Christ. They broke bread and shared wine to obey the instruction of Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:17-20).

Jesus healed many people in this region (3:10). He stopped the evil spirits from shouting out that He was the Son of God (3:12). He did not want the unclean spirits to speak about Him. Satan will try to do anything to stop the witness of Jesus. Jesus came to honour and obey God His Father. He came to save and to serve others.

Later, Jesus went to the hills. He chose twelve of His followers and called them His disciples (3:14-15):

- to be with Him at all times;
- to teach them about the Kingdom of God;
- to send them out to teach and to preach;
- to give them power to heal and authority to drive out demons.

The twelve disciples included Judas Iscariot who later betrayed Jesus (3:19).

For three years, Jesus taught the disciples to be messengers of God. He encouraged them to tell the Good News from God that salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught them that it was the plan of God to sacrifice His Son to save sinners.

THE POWER OF GOD OVER SATAN

Again, large crowds gathered to listen to Jesus (3:20). The Pharisees said, "He is driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons" (3:22).

Jesus asked them, "How can Satan drive out Satan?" This did not make sense. Jesus said (3:24-27):

- “If a kingdom fights against itself, it cannot stand.”
- “If a family fights against itself, it cannot stand.”
- “If Satan fights against himself ... he cannot stand.”

Jesus also said that if you rob a house, you must first tie up the strong man who owns the house.

Satan is strong, but Jesus is stronger than Satan. Jesus came to bind the strong man and to free his prisoners. Jesus drives out demons. He also came to people bound by sin and by religious traditions, to set them free (Galatians 3:22-23).

“Evil words against God will be forgiven. But anyone who speaks evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.” He said this because the teachers of the Law said that He had an evil spirit (Mark 3:28-30). Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.

JESUS AND HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS

It may surprise you to read that on one occasion Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers (3:31). He knew that they wanted to take Him away (3:21). They were worried about the things people were saying about Him. Some people thought that Jesus was mad.

Jesus did not want to argue with His family. So He chose not to see them. In this way, they would not delay the plan of God. He wanted to stay with the people who needed Him. The crowds wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters (3:35). The followers of Jesus are the family of God.

Mark does not say that Jesus turned away from His own mother and brothers. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were doing the will of God. He did the kindest thing and the correct thing towards His family. He avoided a family argument while doing the will of His heavenly Father.

Sometimes, our relatives make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what the plan or will of God is. We must avoid big troubles when we make family decisions.

Satan uses the love and fears of family members to try to stop the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not feel anger, for His family, only love. His family also included the poor and sick people in the world who needed Him.



Talk about this:

1. Was it wrong to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath day? What things can we do on the Sabbath?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "The Sabbath day was made for man" (2:27)?
3. Why do some people fast?
4. What does it mean to become disciples of Jesus?
5. How did Jesus show love for His mother and family? How did He avoid family troubles?



Think about this:

How do we show that we are part of a worldwide family of God (3:34-35)?
How do we avoid family troubles?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 4

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE SEED

Many people followed Jesus so He again sat in a boat to teach (4:1). Jesus taught the people many things using stories of life, called parables (4:2).

In this parable, the sower means someone who shares the Good News of Jesus. The seed he sows is the truth or the message from God. It is the Gospel or the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ. The person who shares the truth from God sows the seed in the world. He shares the truth about what he has seen and heard or witnessed. A witness who explains this truth is a teacher or messenger.

In the parable, the sower scattered the seed on the ground as far as he could (4:4). Some seed fell on the path and the birds ate it up. Some seed fell on stony ground and the plants did not live long in the hot sun. Some seed fell among weeds and the plants did not grow strong. But some seed fell on good ground. The soil was well prepared. It was open and ready to receive the seed. It produced a good harvest.

Later, Jesus explained this parable to His disciples (4:13-20). Some people are as hard as the path. Their hearts do not take in the Good News of Jesus. There is nowhere for the seed to grow. Satan quickly takes away the message that was given to them (4:15). Their hearts are not prepared ready to receive the Word of God.

- Some people have only a little room to take in the message of God. The seed grows quickly in between the rocks and stones. But there is little soil for the seed to grow. People receive the message of God but easily give up when trouble comes (4:16-17). Their faith in God is shallow, not deep.
- Some people have lives full of other things: worry, love of money and the things that money buys. These all weaken their faith (4:18-19). They love God but they also love other things. Their lives become unfruitful.
- Some people are open and ready to receive the Gospel. Then the Word of God grows and produces a good crop (4:20). The new life of true faith in God produces much good fruit. Hearts that are prepared well will receive and share the truth from God. Their lives will be fruitful.
- When we tell other people the Good News, some will understand. Others will not want to listen or they will not understand.
- Some will quickly follow Jesus but will get discouraged. They will quickly give up because of a weak faith.
- Some will follow Jesus but then go the wrong way in life because they also want to do many other things.

But the people who hear and understand these things will live fruitful lives in the Kingdom of God (4:20).

Jesus warned the crowds that if they did not understand this parable, then they would not understand the other parables (4:13). This is what Isaiah warned in the Old Testament (4:12; Isaiah 6:9,10). This is why Jesus warned everyone, "Those who have ears should listen" (Mark 4:9).

This parable shows the difference between people who are saved and people who are lost. It shows what happens to people who do not listen carefully to the truth from God. Their hearts are not ready to receive the truth from God. They do not let the truth change their lives. Then their faith is not strong when troubles come. But those who are ready to receive the Word of God produce a good harvest at the right time. Their lives produce good things.



MORE PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus asked, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or under a bed? Or do you put it on its stand?" (4:21). Jesus came as a light for the world (John 8:12). His light must be brought into the open (Mark 4:22). The light of Jesus is the truth from God.

Jesus said again, "Everyone who has ears should listen" (4:23). He added, "Think carefully about what you hear." We must share with others the understanding from God that we have received.

The light of the truth from God will bless others. It brings gifts from God. It brings new life on earth, joy, peace, faith and eternal life in heaven. Jesus said, "As you give [to others], so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more" (4:24).

However, people who do not listen and do not receive these gifts from God have very little to share. Jesus warned, "If you have nothing, even what you have will be taken away from you" (4:24). So let us listen carefully and understand the things of God. Then let us share what we understand to bless others. If not, we will lose the little understanding we have.

The disciples of Jesus did not understand the things He said about the Kingdom of God. So Jesus used more stories, or parables, to teach them.

Jesus taught them what the Kingdom of God is like. A farmer who sows seed is like a messenger who preaches the Word of God. He digs and prepares the soil. He then throws the seed on the open ground. He believes that the seed grows by itself. He does not know how it happens. He believes that it will produce a harvest with many more seeds (4:26-29).

The growing seed from the messenger of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. It grows in the lives of the people who open their hearts to the truth from God.

A farmer cannot produce the harvest. He prepares the soil so that it is open to receive the seed. He cares for the young plants. Then he waits in faith for the harvest.



Teaching truth with parables

Jesus used parables to teach the truth from God and His Kingdom.

- A parable is a story about life that has a deeper, spiritual meaning.
- It was prophesied that the Messiah would use parables for teaching the truth from God (Psalm 78:2).
- Jesus often explained His parables later to the twelve disciples (Mark 4:13,34).

Jesus made the stories interesting to make the people smile (4:8,21,28,32).

Jesus told another parable about the Kingdom of God. It was like a tiny mustard seed planted in the ground. In less than a year it grew larger than all the other plants. Its branches were so big that birds could rest in its shade (4:30-32).

The Kingdom of God on earth began as a very small thing. The first followers of Jesus were not important people. They were ordinary men and women who went out preaching the Word of God. During their lifetime, the Kingdom of God spread across Europe, Asia and Africa, just as Jesus promised (Acts 1:8).

Jesus told many parables to help the people understand what would happen (Mark 4:33). Men and women either reject the truth of God or believe it and become followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces more seeds and the people of God bring in the harvest.

When Jesus was alone with His disciples, He explained everything to them (4:34). The Kingdom of God needs teachers as well as preachers. It needs workers who will prepare the ground, sow the seed and bring in the harvest. This is all a work of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35-38).

THE DISCIPLES CROSS THE LAKE DURING A STORM

Jesus asked the disciples to go with Him to the other side of the lake called the Sea of Galilee. While they were crossing the lake, a storm started. Waves covered their small boat (4:35-37).

The disciples were afraid. Jesus was asleep. They woke Him. "Teacher, do You not care if we drown?" (4:38). Jesus got up and ordered the wind to stop. Then He said to the waves, "Be still!" The wind stopped and the lake immediately became calm (4:39). Normally, it takes a long time for waves to calm down.



Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen from the region of Galilee. They had never seen anything like this happen before. They were very afraid. They asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him" (4:41).

Jesus wanted to know why they were so afraid. He asked, "Do you not have any faith at all yet?" (4:40). When our hearts are troubled, Jesus says

the same thing to us, "Peace, be still! Calm down!" When troubles come, He is always there with us. He wants us to trust Him even when we are afraid. Jesus calmed the wind, the waves and the disciples.



Talk about this:

1. What did Jesus mean by "Those who have ears should listen" (4:9,23)?
2. What did the Old Testament prophet say about hard hearts (4:12; Isaiah 6:9-10)?
3. What is the purpose of God in the parable of the sower (4:14,20)?
4. What is the purpose of Satan in the parable (4:15-19)?
5. What is good ground (4:8,20,27-29)? How are lives prepared for receiving the truth from God? © GRN
6. What is bad ground (4:4-6; 15-19)? How are lives stopped from receiving the truth from God?
7. What can we do to help people understand the truth from God (4:34)?
8. What did Jesus say about the faith of the disciples (4:40)?



Think about this:

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to prepare the ground, to sow and to grow seeds and to bring in a harvest. How much peace and faith do you have in the storms of life (4:40)? Is Jesus with you in your boat?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 5

JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO A MAN WITH DEMONS

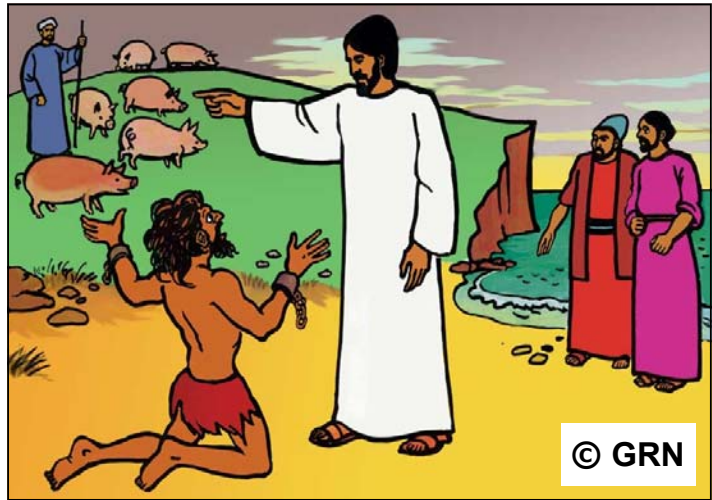
Jesus and His disciples travelled by boat to the region of the Gerasenes (5:1). This was on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. The caves there were used for burying dead people. A man lived in the caves. Evil spirits lived inside him. They were demons that made him violent and angry. The people tried to put him in chains but he broke them. He screamed night and day and cut himself (5:3-5).

The man saw Jesus get out of the boat. He ran up to Jesus and knelt down in front of Him (5:6). The evil spirits knew who Jesus was. The man shouted, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Promise before God that You will not hurt me!" (5:7). Evil spirits know who Jesus is. They know that Jesus has authority over them and they fear Him (James 2:19).

Jesus ordered the demons to leave the man (5:8). The man begged Jesus not to send them out of him (5:10).

There was a herd of pigs nearby. The demons asked to go into them (5:11-12). Jesus allowed it. The pigs ran down into the lake and were drowned. There were about 2000 pigs (5:13). Then the man knew that he was free from all those evil spirits.

The men who looked after the pigs told everyone what had happened. When the people heard this, they went to see for themselves (5:14). They found the man at peace, sitting quietly with Jesus (5:15).



The people were afraid. Before, they were afraid of the man with the demons. Now they were afraid of the power of God. So they begged Jesus to go away (5:17).

The man wanted to go with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus did not let him. He said, "Go home to your family. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how He has been kind to you" (5:18-19). Now he could witness to his family what Jesus had done for him.

The man also witnessed to people in the Ten Cities on that side of Sea of Galilee. They were amazed (5:20). These people were not Jews but gladly they received the Good News of Jesus.

Jesus returned to the other side of the lake where the Jews lived (5:21).

Often envy, witchcraft, drugs, alcohol or gambling destroy family life. These things make people cruel. They allow evil spirits to control their lives. Only the power of Jesus can drive these demons out. Evil spirits are not afraid of us. They are afraid of Holy Spirit power in us. Only Jesus can cast out evil and give a spirit of love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).

This man came freely to Jesus. But he was only truly free when Jesus cast out the demons.

THE FAITH OF A WOMAN AND A SYNAGOGUE LEADER

Jairus was one of the Jewish synagogue leaders. He came to Jesus and knelt at His feet. He begged Jesus, "My little daughter is dying. Please come. Place

Your hands on her to heal her. Then she will live" (5:23).

The crowd followed Jesus. A very sick woman followed Him. She had bled for 12 years. She spent all her money on medicines, but the bleeding got worse. In faith she reached out to Jesus and touched His clothes. Immediately, she was healed. The woman knew that she was healed inside her body (5:25-29).

Jesus turned round and asked, "Who touched My clothes?" He knew that power had gone out from Him (5:30). The woman knelt down at the feet of Jesus. She was shaking with fear but she told Him the truth (5:33).

Jesus said to her, "Dear woman, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. You are free from your suffering" (5:34). No one had ever spoken words like these to this woman before.

Do you have a sickness? Or has someone hurt you inside? Reach out to Jesus. He is waiting for you to trust Him. Believe that He will take away your pain.

Jairus was still with Jesus. Messengers arrived with bad news. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the Teacher any more?" Jesus did not listen to them. He told Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Just believe" (5:35-36).

Then Jesus asked Peter, James and John to follow him to the home of Jairus (5:37). He often kept these three men close to Him (9:2).

They met some mourners who were crying loudly. Jesus went inside. He said to them, "Why all this confusion and crying? The child is not dead. She is only sleeping." They laughed at Him (5:38-40).

Jesus made them all go outside. He took the mother and father and the three disciples inside. He took the girl by the hand and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" At once, she stood up and walked around. Everyone was amazed (5:41-42).

Jesus has power to heal people and to give back life. Reach out to Him in faith for all your needs. He has promised to answer your prayers. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever' (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus ordered the family not to let anyone know what really happened. Then He told them to give the girl something to eat (Mark 5:43).

Peter, James and John saw and heard what happened. Peter later wrote in one of his



letters, 'Give all your worries to Him. He cares about you' (1 Peter 5:7). The bleeding woman had faith in Jesus for herself. Jairus had faith in Jesus for his daughter. God blessed their faith and answered their prayers. God wants to bless those who have needs, who are sad and who are willing to ask Him for help (Matthew 5:3-5).

The man with the demons, the bleeding woman and Jairus, believed in Jesus in very different ways. Their faith brought fullness of health in body, mind and spirit.



Talk about this:

1. Describe the faith of the man with demons (5:2-7).
2. What do demons know about Jesus (5:7)?
3. What did the local people see when they went to the caves (5:15)?
4. What did the man want to do (5:18)? What did Jesus want him to do (5:19)? What was the result (5:20)?
5. Describe the faith of Jairus (5:23) and the woman (5:28).
6. What did the disciples learn about the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus (5:30-33; 40-42)? What did they learn about His love for others (5:34,43)?



Think about this:

What was the result of the faith of the man with the demons, the woman and Jairus? What can Jesus do to help you, your family and your neighbours?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 6

NO FAITH AT NAZARETH

Jesus went back to Nazareth where He grew up (1:9; 6:1). He taught in the synagogue, the local Jewish meeting house. It was the Sabbath day. Many who heard Him were amazed (6:2). But they did not believe that He was the Messiah, or Christ. They knew that He was the son of a carpenter. They knew His brothers and sisters (6:3). They could not believe in Him. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Christians may go to many places taking blessing to others. However, they are not always valued in their home town (6:4). Jesus healed only a few people in Nazareth because they had little faith in Him (6:5). He was amazed (6:6).

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus left Nazareth and went to other villages in Galilee. His time on earth would soon end. Many places had not heard the Good News. So He sent the disciples out to tell it to others. 'He sent them ahead to ... every town and place He was going to visit' (Luke 10:1). Jesus gave them power over evil spirits (Mark 6:7). Notice that they did not go alone, they went in twos.

Notice also that He said to them, "Take no bread, no bag and no money in your belts." They were doing this work for God so they did not need to worry about food or money or extra clothes (6:8-9). They could trust in God for their needs (6:10). But they did not stay where they were not welcome (6:11).

The same power that was in the disciples is in all believers. 'The disciples went out. They preached that people should turn away from their sins. They drove out many demons. They poured olive oil on many people who were ill and healed them' (6:12-13). They did this in the power of Jesus and with His authority (6:7).

HOW HEROD KILLED JOHN THE BAPTISER

King Herod ruled in Galilee. He was not a friend of the Jews. He was a friend of the Romans. He was called King because he was governor of a large part of Israel (Matthew 14:1). His wife tricked him to kill John the Baptist.

Herod heard that Jesus healed sick people and drove out demons. He also heard that some people believed God had raised John the Baptist from the dead. Others said, "He is Elijah" (Mark 6:15). Many thought he was one of the prophets of God from long ago.

This troubled Herod. He put John in prison for preaching to him. John told Herod that it was wrong for him to marry the wife of his brother (6:16–18).

The new wife of Herod hated John. Herod put him in prison. Herod made a foolish promise to her daughter at his birthday party. He boasted, "Anything you ask for I will give to you" (6:23). Her mother told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist (6:24). Sadly he sent the order to kill John. He was afraid to break his promise in front of important guests (6:27).

Later, Herod wanted to kill Jesus, too. Jesus said, "Tell that fox [Herod] ... I must keep going" (Luke 13:33). Jesus knew that this evil man could not stop the plan of His Father to save people from their sins. It was the plan of God for His Son to go to Jerusalem at the right time. There He would die for sinners in the way that God had always planned.

JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND

The disciples returned to Jesus. They told him all they had done and taught (Mark 6:30). Jesus could not eat with His disciples because so many people were coming and going (6:31). He said, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place. You need to get some rest." So they got into a boat and went along the lake (6:32).

People saw them leaving and they ran ahead. They hoped that they would find Jesus (6:33).

Jesus was sorry for them. 'They were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things' (6:34). But the disciples said to Jesus, "It is already very late. Send the people away. They can go and buy something to eat" (6:35-36).



Jesus told the disciples, "You give them something to eat." Philip said that they did not have enough money to buy food. Andrew said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves of bread. He also has two small fish. But how far will that go in such a large crowd?" (John 6:7-8).

Jesus told the people to sit down. 'He took the five loaves and two fish. He looked up to heaven and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread into pieces. Then He gave them to His disciples to give to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all' (Mark 6:41).

'All of them ate and were satisfied. The disciples picked up 12 baskets of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of men who ate was 5,000', not counting some women and children (6:42-44). They were all amazed.

See how Jesus used the disciples to work this miracle. Christians often complain that the job is too big. But God has given us all that we need through the power of His Spirit. God uses the little we have to work His miracles. But if we do not use what we have, we cannot see Him at work.

Jesus sent the disciples away in a boat. Then He sent the crowds away. He went up the mountain to pray (6:45-46).

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Jesus saw the disciples rowing the boat against the wind. They were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Early in the morning, He went to them. He walked on the lake (6:47-48). They saw Him and thought He was a ghost.

They were afraid and shouted out (6:49).

At once Jesus said to them, "Be brave! It is Me. Do not be afraid" (6:50). He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely amazed (6:51).

The disciples still did not have much faith. They followed Jesus and saw miracles. But they did not understand about the loaves and fish. They were stubborn (6:52). They were also afraid when He walked on water and calmed the wind. But with Jesus in their boat, they found peace.

As soon as Jesus and His disciples landed at Gennesaret, the crowds ran to Him. They carried sick people on mats. Everywhere He went, all who touched Him were healed (6:53–56).



Talk about this:

1. Why could Jesus not do many miracles in Nazareth (6:4-5)?
2. Why did Jesus send the disciples out (6:7,12-13; Luke 10:1)?
3. What power and authority do we have when we talk to others about Jesus (6:10-13)?
4. What should we do when the work of God is too big for us (6:37-42)? How does faith grow?
5. What did the disciples need to learn about Jesus (6:50-52)?



Think about this:

When needs are great, do you give up? Do you hope that the problems will go away? Or do you do what little you can so that Jesus can perform miracles through you?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 7

THE TEACHINGS OF THE JEWISH LEADERS

The Jews always washed their hands before they ate food. Many washed them in a special way. One day, the religious leaders saw that the disciples ate food without washing their hands (7:2). So the teachers of the law questioned Jesus. "Why do they eat their food with unclean hands?" (7:5.)

He replied, "Isaiah was right. He prophesied about you people who pretend to be good." Isaiah the prophet said that these teachers honour God by what they say but their hearts are far from Him. They teach only human rules (7:6-7; Isaiah 29:13).

Jesus told the teachers, "You keep the teachings that men have made" (Mark 7:8). Then He gave an example. These teachers told people to give money to God instead of using it to help their aged parents. They were not obeying the commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:12). Jesus told them, "You make the word of God useless by putting your own teachings in its place. You do many things like that" (Mark 7:13).

Washing hands in a special way before they ate food was one of the Jewish rules. But Jesus told them, "It is what comes out of you that makes you unclean" (7:15).

These Jewish teachers from Jerusalem looked good on the outside but God wants us to be good on the inside. It is the things we think and do which are important to God. God knows our thoughts.

Later, Jesus told the disciples that evil thoughts come from our hearts. "Sexual sins, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, cheating come from the heart. So do telling lies about others and being proud and being foolish. All these evil things come from inside a person. They make a person unclean" (7:21-23).

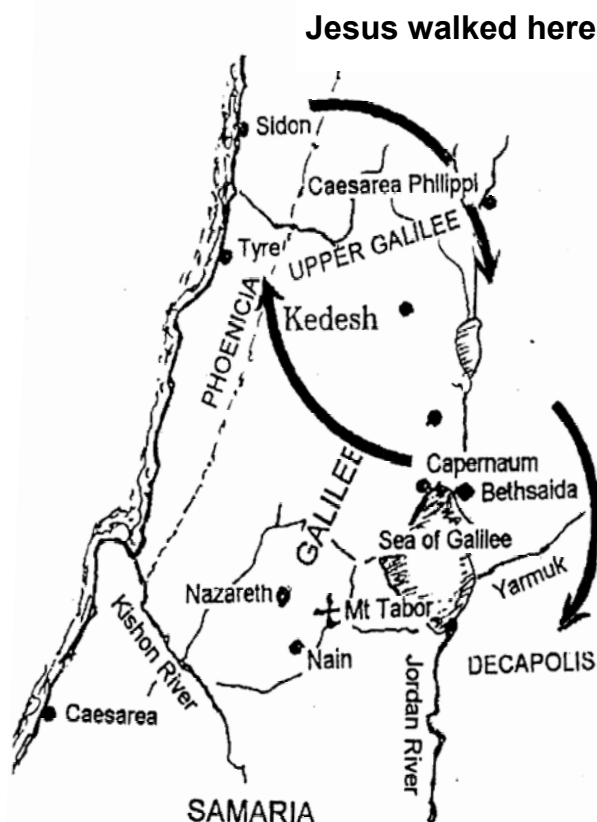
A FOREIGN WOMAN SHOWS FAITH IN JESUS

Jesus left that place and walked 60 km to Tyre (7:24). Tyre and Sidon were very old cities on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The people who lived there were not Jews. They worshipped gods or idols.

Jesus did not want people to know where He was. But even in this place, the people knew about Jesus.

A woman saw Jesus and knelt down at His feet. She wanted Jesus to heal her daughter. An evil spirit controlled her little girl (7:25). 'She begged Jesus to drive out the demon from her daughter' (7:26).

Jesus told her, "It is not right to take the bread from the children



and throw it to dogs” (7:27). Jesus meant that he had come to teach the truth of the Kingdom of God to the Jews first. Jesus told His disciples to do this (Matthew 10:6). Their time to teach those who were not Jews would come later (Mark 16:15).

The woman knew what Jesus meant. She knew that Jesus was testing her faith. She was bold and strong in her faith. She answered, “Yes Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs that the children leave” (7:28).

Jesus was very pleased with her answer. He told her, “That was a good reply. You may go now. The demon has left your daughter” (7:29). She went home and the demon was gone (7:30).

The Kingdom of God is for all people including foreigners. Jesus accepts anyone who confesses his or her sins, repents and follows Him. He later warned those who did not repent. He said that it would be easier for Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day (Matthew 11:20-22).

JESUS HEALS A DEAF AND DUMB MAN

From Tyre, Jesus travelled back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The people who lived there were also not Jews. He continued to perform miracles among the non-Jews. Jesus healed a man who was deaf and could not speak very well. The man was healed because the people brought him to Jesus with faith. ‘They begged Jesus to place His hand on the man’ (7:32). He put His fingers in the ears of the man. He touched the tongue of the man. The man was healed. The people were amazed.



Talk about this:

1. Are the words of Isaiah from the Old Testament still true today (7:6,7)?
2. What did the woman from Tyre believe about Jesus (7:25)?
3. Who helped the deaf and dumb man to be healed (7:33–34)? What did they believe about Jesus?
4. Why did Jesus heal people who did not belong to His country, culture or faith?



Think about this:

Do your church traditions reduce the witness of Jesus outside the church? Do you help only people inside the church or outside the church as well? Do you offer to pray for foreigners and for those who do not worship the Lord God Almighty?



Now read this: Mark Chapter 8

JESUS FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND

Many people listened to Jesus as He spoke (8:1). They had been with Him for three days with nothing to eat. Jesus said, "I feel deep concern for these people... Some have come from far away" (8:2-3).

The disciples had seven loaves with them. 'He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and thanked God for them. Then He broke them and gave them to the disciples. They set the loaves down in front of the people' (8:6).

'The disciples also had a few small fish. Jesus thanked God for them too. He told the disciples to share them' (8:7). When we obey Jesus and have faith in Him, He can open the way for a miracle. They obeyed. About 4000 men ate the food and were filled. There were seven baskets of food left over.

After this, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This was on the north-west side of the lake where the Jews lived.

THOSE WITH LITTLE FAITH, NO FAITH OR GREAT FAITH

Some of the religious leaders met Jesus. They were the Pharisees. They came and began to ask Jesus questions. They wanted to test Him. So they asked Him for a miracle, a sign from Heaven (8:11).

Those Pharisees had no faith in Jesus. Their questions made Jesus sad and tired. He sighed deeply. He said, "No sign will be given to you" (8:12).

Jesus left them. He and the disciples went into the boat again to go to Bethsaida (8:13). The disciples had forgotten to bring some bread with them (8:14). Jesus warned, "Be careful about the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod" (8:15).

The disciples were confused (8:16-17). Jesus asked them, "Do you have eyes and still do not see? Do you have ears and still do not hear?" (8:18).

Jesus used the words of the prophet Ezekiel who lived 600 years earlier. God told Ezekiel, "You are living among people who refuse to obey Me. They have eyes that can see. But they do not really see. They have ears that can hear. But they do not really hear. They refuse to obey me" (Ezekiel 12:2).

Jesus did not want faith in Him to be destroyed by the rules of the

Pharisees or their evil king Herod. He wanted his disciples to remember the feeding of the 5000 and 4000. He wanted them to have more faith in Him. He said to them, "Can't you understand yet?" (Mark 8:21).

Jesus walked away from the Pharisees who did not want to believe in Him. But He helped His followers who wanted to understand the truth.

In Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus. They asked Jesus to touch and to heal him (8:22).

Jesus took the man outside the village. The healing was in two stages. The man could not see clearly at first. 'Once more Jesus put His hands on the eyes of the man. Then... he saw everything clearly' (8:25).

Spiritually the disciples were like this blind man. They could not see clearly the things that Jesus taught. They needed more faith to follow what Jesus was saying and doing. They had to learn to obey the Son of God, not follow the traditions or rules of men.

After the resurrection of Jesus, the faith of the disciples and the power of the Holy Spirit changed the lives of many people in Europe, Africa and Asia. Faith in Jesus is a gift from God that has changed the world one by one.

PETER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST

Jesus and His disciples went to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. One day, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say I am?" (8:27). He wanted to know what they really believed.

They answered, "Some say that you are John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Still others say [that you are] one of the prophets" (8:28).

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" (8:29).

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Peter meant the Messiah, the special king that God had promised Israel, who would become saviour of the world (Jeremiah 23:5). At last the eyes of the disciples were opened!

Jesus was pleased with this answer. "This faith was not given to you by man. My Father in Heaven showed it to you" (Matthew 16:17).

THE WAY OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS

Jesus then told His disciples what would soon happen to Him. 'He told them that He must suffer many things. He said that the religious leaders would not accept Him. The chief priests and the teachers of the [religious] law would

not accept him either. He must be killed and after three days rise again' (8:31).

He spoke to them clearly, not in parables. Soon, He would be taken away by His own people, the Jews and their religious leaders. Many would shout, "Kill Him!"

Peter was very upset about this. He did not want to believe that his Lord and Master would be rejected. He said to Jesus "Never, Lord! This will never happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22.)

Satan used Peter's words to try to stop the calling of Jesus. Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan. You are not thinking about the things God cares about" (8:33). Satan had put these words into the mouth of Peter. Satan uses any means to stop or destroy the plan of God to save men and women from their sins. Peter did not fully understand the plan of God for Jesus to suffer and to die. Jesus told him, "You are thinking only about human things."

THE WAY OF THE CROSS FOR FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Then Jesus called the people to Him. He said, "If you want to be my disciple, you must put yourself last. You must pick up your cross and follow me" (8:34).

Jesus warned them all that every follower had to take up their own cross. The way of the cross is a way of suffering. Each person must be ready to give up their own way of life. We must be ready to do the will of God for our lives. That is what Peter needed to do.

For followers of Jesus, His cross is not just a thing of gold or silver on a chain. The cross means death to our old life. We live to serve God. We do only the things that please Him. The cross means dying to our old selves, and then allowing the Holy Spirit to make our lives new.

Jesus gave up His glory and power and came to earth as a baby to do what the Father wanted (Philippians 2:7-8). Now He offers His followers a new life and calling. He gave up everything to seek and to save those who were lost.

Jesus wants His followers to put God first in their lives and to spread the Good News. "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for Me and for the Good News will save it" (8:35). For many people who have followed Jesus, it has cost them their lives. For some people today, it might also cost them their lives. Are we ready to give everything we have for Jesus, if necessary, then live with him forever? (1 John 5:11-12.)

Jesus later sent the Holy Spirit to live in His followers. The Holy Spirit gives peace, joy and hope and the power to overcome evil (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 6:10-20). Christians believe that our God is three-in-one: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

WARNINGS FROM JESUS

Jesus warned His followers that it is not good if someone gains many riches in this world but loses his soul (8:36). They will lose their eternal life in heaven. He said that there is nothing more important than eternal life (8:37).

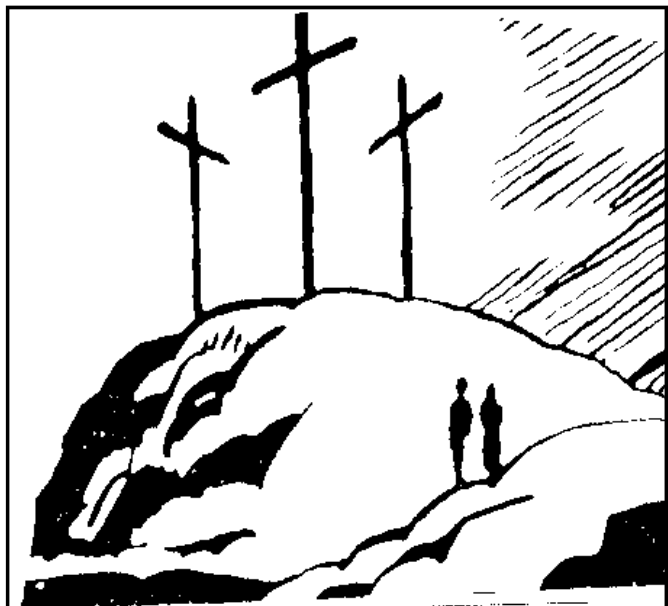
Later, Jesus warned those who did not stop sinning. He said that it would be easier for the foreigners who lived in Tyre and Sidon. "On judgement day it will be easier for Tyre and Sidon than for you" (Matthew 11:20-22).

Jesus also spoke about His Second Coming. Jesus promised to return in the glory of His Father and with the holy angels. When Jesus returns, He will not accept those who have not accepted Him (Mark 8:38).



Talk about this:

1. What compassion did Jesus show the for the people (8:2-3)?
2. Why did Jesus ask the disciples to help him with the miracle (8:6-8)?
3. What made Jesus sad (8:12,17)? What did Jesus then do or say (8:13,18)?
4. Why were the disciples compared to the people of Israel at the time of Ezekiel (8:18)?
5. What two questions did Jesus ask about himself (8:27-29)? What is your answer?
6. What promise do we receive when we take up our own cross to follow Jesus? (8:34-35)
7. What is worth more than money? (8:36)
8. How do we prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus (8:38)?



Think about this:

What compassion (8:2,3), faith (8:4,5) and commitment (8:6-8) do we need to do the work of Jesus today? How deaf and blind are you to the teachings

and miracles of Jesus (8:18-21)? Pray to hear and see clearly what God is doing today.



Spreading the Good News

Jesus told His disciples to teach everyone all that He taught them (Matthew 28:20). Some preachers teach the Good News of Jesus by only telling people that God loves everyone and will bless them and give them good things if they follow to follow Jesus. Jesus came to tell the whole truth from God (John 18:37). God knows that we deserve to be punished for our sins and need to be set free from our sins. Jesus came to take the punishment for us by dying on the cross. If we repent and believe this, then we can be forgiven and accepted by God. Then He can give us a new purpose in this life and hope for the future. But there will be troubles at times. We must be ready to pick up our own cross and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). It is the whole Gospel that we must teach and preach. This is called spreading the Good News.

CONCLUSIONS

The book of Mark tell us the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus chose and taught His disciples to have faith in Him. He prepared them to do His ministry of teaching with miracles of healing and freedom from evil spirits. He taught them the truth about His heavenly Father, our Lord God Almighty.

Jesus gave His followers many examples of the Kingdom of God. He also warned everyone not to reject the promise of eternal life in heaven. Instead, He warned His followers to feed daily on the bread of eternal life which is Christ Himself.

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