

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MARK

AUTHOR:

The author of this gospel was a Jewish man by the name of John Mark. Mark was a native of Jerusalem who became a close associate of the Apostles Peter and Paul. When Paul and his partner Barnabas went on their first missionary journey, he became their assistant (Acts 13:1-5) When Mark left his companion halfway through the journey Paul's opinion of him plummeted, but before long they were reconciled. In the end Paul could write to Timothy saying, "Get Mark and bring him with you" for he is helpful to me in my ministry." (II Timothy 4:11)

Mark was also close to the Apostle Peter, who called him "my son Mark." (I Peter 5:13) Early church tradition tells us that Mark became a constant companion of Peter and learned much about the Lord Jesus' earthly life from him. Thus Mark's Gospel carries the weight of the apostolic authority of Peter whose eyewitness accounts the writer recorded.

CHARACTERISTICS:

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. This record of Jesus' life progresses at breathtaking speed and is often punctuated with words like "immediately", "at once", "quickly". Its emphasis falls on the actions of Jesus rather than on his teachings.

Mark pictures the Lord not so much as the Messianic King (Matthew), the Perfect Man (Luke), or the Incarnate God (John), but as the Suffering Servant. He came to serve, this Gospel stresses, and to give his life for others (Mark 10:45). Though he is the Son of God with power to exorcize demons, heal the sick and cleanse the lepers His ultimate purpose is to suffer and die before rising from the dead (8:31).

The implications for those who follow him are clear. One day we will indeed be exalted and reign with him. Yet in the meantime we are to become like children, humble and open (9:33-37, 10:13-16), serving one another and Christ by taking up our cross in imitation of him (8:34-38).

OUTLINE

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STUDY 1 - THE SON OF GOD APPEARS

READ: Mark 1:1 - 45

INTRODUCTION

It wasn't long after Jesus of Nazareth commenced his public ministry that people recognized his uniqueness. He came out of nowhere, a traveling teacher from the dusty town of Nazareth, and began to preach with unparalleled authority, to heal those sick with every sort of malady, to exorcise demons and cleanse lepers. No one had ever spoken or acted like this man and both heaven (V11) and hell (V24) declared Him to be God's Holy Son. The power of His personality drew people irresistibly to him until this humble son of a carpenter could no longer appear in public for fear of being mobbed by the astonished crowds (V45).

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. In one short sentence describe the essence of John the Baptist's ministry (V1-8). How, specifically, does John go about fulfilling his ministry?
2. Consider V9-11. Can you think of any reasons why it might have been inappropriate for Jesus to be baptized by John? Why do you think the Lord submitted to John's baptism? (Compare Matthew 3:13-15)
3. When Jesus called his first disciples (V16-20) Simon and Andrew abandoned their occupation and James and John deserted their family. Were they being irresponsible? Cite a present day example in which the appearance of irresponsibility is false for the same reason.
4. Consider V21-20. How did the demon - possessed man react to the presence of the Lord? Why do you think he didn't simply remain silent?
5. Why did the Lord Jesus retreat to pray at the particular time recorded in V35-39? (See V29-34) what seemingly legitimate excuse might he have given for not taking time here to pray? How does the example of the Lord instruct us in our struggle to take time to pray?
6. Consider V40-45. why did Jesus heal this leper? Explain the significance of his touching the leper.
7. How does the cleansed leper respond to Jesus' command that he keep silent? Why couldn't he keep quiet? How do we respond when the Lord Jesus has commanded us to tell others about Him? What should motivate our evangelism?

STUDY 2 - OLD WINESKINS BURST

READ: Mark 2: 1 - 3:35

INTRODUCTION

George Bernard Shaw once said, "it is dangerous to be good." This was certainly true in the case of Jesus Christ. Although the Pharisees were religious he was truly good. They were over concerned with fulfilling the minute details of their interpretation of God's law.. He, on the other hand, actually fulfilled the spirit of the Law by caring for people. His heart went out to a paralytic and healed him (2:1-12); He had compassion on the despised tax collectors and "sinners" and ate with them (13-17) He pitied a man with a shriveled hand and made him whole (3:1-6). The Pharisees, however took offense at Jesus' declaration that the paralytic's sins were forgiven, they stumbled over his association with "sinners", they were incensed that he would heal on the Sabbath, their holy day So for his kindness, they plotted his death (3:6) for his love, they called him demon (3:22).

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Consider 2:1-12. If the paralytic's most obvious need was for healing, why did Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven"? What is 'easier', to forgive sins or to heal physically?
2. How did the teachers of the law react to Jesus when he fraternized with tax collectors and "sinners" (2:13-17)? Why do you think the Lord did not concern himself to be more discreet? What does his example teach us?
3. What thought may have been behind the question asked of Jesus in verse 18? (See Matthew 11:10) Why did Jesus' disciples not fast? What, if anything, does this passage suggest to u about the place of fasting in a Christian's life?
4. Explain the parables the Lord tells in V21 & 22. How might the principle(s) expressed here apply to our own church life?
5. Consider 2:23-3:6. Why did God originally institute the Sabbath (See also Exodus 23:12)? Where had the Pharisees gone wrong in their understanding of the Sabbath? Explain why it was perfectly proper for the disciples to pick the grain and the Lord to heal on the Sabbath.
6. Read 3:13-19. According to V14, for what two purposes were the twelve disciples chosen. Explain the importance of the first of these two purposes. What implications does this have for Christian discipleship in our day?
7. According to the context (3:20-30) what is the unpardonable sin (V28-29)? Can this sin be committed unintentionally or unknowingly?
8. Was the Lord Jesus being inconsiderate to his family in the incident recorded in 3:31-35? What point was he trying to make? How should the Lord's teaching here affect our relationships to our families and to our Christian brothers and sisters?

STUDY 3 - HOW DOES THE KINGDOM GROW?

READ: Mark 4:1 - 47

INTRODUCTION

As we seek to communicate and live by the gospel, a number of questions and problems arise in our minds. "Why. If the gospel is true, do so many reject the good news?" Also, "How can we expect people to embrace the gospel. when it is based on the scandal of believing in a man who was executed as common criminal and on the teaching that to have life we must lay our lives down?" And finally "Can God's purposes in the world really be fulfilled when we see how few today truly embrace the gospel?"

Jesus answers these questions in the three "seed" parables of Mark 4. Many indeed reject the Good News for various reasons, says the Parable of the Sower (V1-20). But some will believe and produce a great harvest of righteousness. Is the gospel a stumbling block for people? Sure, says the Parable of the Growing Seed (V26-29) but it has a mysterious power all its own, and will be effective though we don't know how. Does the work of God seem small and frail sometimes? Yes, says the Parable of the Mustard Seed (V30-34) , but one day it will outstrip everything else and dominate the earth.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read the Parable of the Sower (V1-20). How do you understand V1-20? What does the Lord Jesus use Parables for? Discuss with your study group why some scriptures seem to have obscure meanings that we have to dig hard to understand.
2. Describe the three things which prevent the word from bearing fruit. Which of these three do you think is the most prevalent hindrance to faith today?
3. How should the teaching of the Parable of the Sower affect our attitude in evangelism? Should it discourage or encourage us? Explain.
4. How does the Parable of the Hidden Lamp (V21-23) shed light on the problem raised by V11&12? Speculate on why the Lord quotes Isaiah.
5. Consider V26-29. What is the main point of this parable? How does the teaching of this parable give us confidence as we go about the business of spreading the gospel?
6. What does the Parable of the Mustard Seed (V30-34) tell us the expansion of God 's kingdom? When is His kingdom like a tiny seed? When is it like the largest of the plants?
7. Consider V35-41. After the storm was calm how did the disciples feel? (V41) What was it that made them feel this way?

STUDY 4 - THE POWER OF JESUS

READ: Mark 5: 1 - 43

INTRODUCTION

Man often finds himself confronted by hostile powers beyond his control: demonic oppression incurable diseases, death. He stands powerless before them and hopelessness reigns. Yet with His surpassing power, the Lord Jesus had mastery over all these things. He tamed the demoniac who could not be bound; he healed the woman whom no doctor could cure; he removed the sting of death by raising Jarius' daughter from her "sleep". There is, then, no problem or difficulty so great as to cause us to despair, for it is this power --- the power of our Lord Jesus ---- "that is at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20)

STUDY & DISCUSSION

1. Consider V1-20. Describe the condition of the demoniac before he met Jesus. What was his first reaction to Jesus' appearance?
2. What purpose was served by the Lord allowing the demons to enter the swine?
3. How did the Gerasenes or Gadarenes react to Jesus' healing of this notorious demoniac? How might we have expected them to react? Why did they act as they did?
4. Compare Jesus' parting command to the former demoniac with his fulfillment of it. How do they differ? Is the difference significant?
5. Read V21-24. What sort of a man was Jairus? Do you detect anything commendable in his attitude which might have caused Jesus to respond to his request?
6. Why do you suppose the Lord thought it important to bring the deed of the afflicted woman out in the open (V25-34).
7. Describe the faith of this woman. Jesus said to her, "Your faith has healed you." (V34) What is the relationship between a person's faith and the working of God's power?
8. Consider V35-43. If the girl was really dead, what did the Lord intend by saying "The child is not dead but asleep." (See John 11:11-13, 25 & 26)?

STUDY 5 - A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOUR

READ: Mark 6 : 1 - 56

INTRODUCTION

People in Jesus' day found it difficult to deal with his supernatural power. Those who were closest to him seem to have had the poorest response to his miracles. For example, the folks from his hometown couldn't comprehend how someone they knew could have such power, and they took offense at him. Even his disciples, his constant companions, hardened their hearts at some of his miracles (V52). Those who didn't know him did a little better. They figured he must be Elijah returned, or a prophet like one of those in the Old Testament, or John the Baptist come back from the dead (V14-15). It was those in need, however, who had the best response. They believed in his power and begged to be allowed just to touch the hem of his garment. And all who did were healed.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read V1-6. What sort of relationships and interaction do you think Jesus probably had with the citizens of his hometown before He began his public ministry? Why did they find it so hard to accept Him as the Messiah?
2. Why was Jesus not able to do miracles in his hometown? Did He lack the power? What does this story say about possible reasons the Lord Jesus doesn't work as powerfully as He might among us today?
3. Consider V7-13. What attitude do you think the Lord Jesus was trying to foster in His disciples when He commanded them not to take food, money or an extra tunic with them as they traveled and preached?
4. Read V14-29. How did different people account for the miraculous power of Jesus? Why did Herod come to the conclusion he did about who Jesus was? What conclusion about the person of Jesus is conspicuous by its absence?
5. Consider V30-44. Explain how this incident was a test of the compassion and faith of the disciples. Did the disciples pass this test? How does the Lord test our compassion and faith?
6. What light is shed on the meaning of the events recorded in V45-52 when they are compared with Job 9:87?
7. Why were the disciples amazed after the Lord walked on the water (V52)? Should they have been amazed? What was it about the loaves that they had not understood?
8. Why do you think the people mentioned in V53-56 had no trouble believing in Jesus? What did they have that Jesus' disciples (who hardened their hearts) and his neighbours (who took offense at him) did not have?

STUDY 6 - HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL

READ: Mark 7 : 1 - 37

INTRODUCTION

The miracles and powerful teaching of the Lord Jesus propelled his fame far and wide. The religious establishment in Jerusalem, wanting to keep tabs on this upstart preacher, sent a delegation to investigate his doings. Finding no fault in Jesus Himself, they began nitpicking about his disciples. "Why don't they practice ceremonial hand washing like the rest of us?" was their pathetic complaint. Tired, perhaps of the narrow legalism so prevalent among His Jewish fellow-citizens, Jesus left the country. In pagan lands He found a better response. A Greek woman of Tyre was delighted to receive the "scraps" of His grace that fell to her. In Decapolis men and women acknowledge His greatness and confess, "He does all things well."

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. When the delegation of Scribes and Pharisees arrived from Jerusalem to investigate the Lord Jesus, what did they find to criticize Him about (V1-5)? What does this tell us about the life and conduct of the Lord?
2. The Pharisees practiced various washings not for hygienic but for religious reasons. What did these washings signify? How do these washings reflect the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?
3. What was the Pharisees most important source of religious authority (V6-13)? Why was this a problem? Is it possible for us today to fall into the same mistake? Can you identify any specific cases where this mistake might be operative in our faith and practice?
4. Consider V14-23. Besides ceremonial washings the Pharisees also emphasized eating ceremonially clean (i.e. Kosher) foods. How did this emphasis distract them from seeking true cleanliness? What part of our being should we concern ourselves with if we want to be truly clean?
5. Jesus described His mission thus: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matt 15:24) Why then does He now leave Jewish territory to enter the Gentile areas of Tyre and Sidon (V24-30) and the Decapolis (V31-37)?
6. Consider V24-30. Why do you think the Lord spoke in such an apparently belittling way to the Syro—Phoenician woman? What was it about her response that pleased Him?
7. Read V31-37. Why did Jesus use such dramatics when healing the deaf man? What does this tell us in general about his treatment of others?
8. What conclusion did the people of the Decapolis come to about Jesus? What led them to this conclusion? What things lead you to the same conclusion?

STUDY 7 - YOU ARE THE CHRIST

READ: Mark 8:1 - 9:32

INTRODUCTION

The present passage marks a high point of the revelation of Jesus found in Mark's gospel. His disciples, spiritually blind up to this point, finally display some insight as to who He is. "You are the Christ (i.e. Messiah)," declares Peter (8:29). Also His glory, the manifestation of His true nature, shines forth on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:1-13). Yet a more profound discovery is made in this passage. Here is a Messiah whose glory now must be veiled, and who must be rejected, who must suffer and die.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read the passage 8:1-13. Why was the Lord Jesus quite willing to perform a miracle for the crowd of 4,000 who asked for no miracle, but unwilling to give a miraculous sign to the Pharisees who asked for one?
2. Read V14-21. To what was Jesus referring when He spoke of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod? What did the disciples think he was referring to? What sort of mind set did they have that kept them from understanding Him? What keeps us from understanding His Word?
3. Consider V27-30. What do you think it was in particular that led Peter to his conclusion about Jesus? Why did the Lord not want His disciples to tell anyone else who He was?
4. Consider V31-38. Can you think of any reason why the Lord would have begun to speak of His sufferings now, at this point in His ministry?
5. Why did Jesus call Peter "Satan"? In what way was Peter playing the part of Satan?
6. What concept of the Messiah did Peter probably hold? What concept of following the Messiah did Peter probably hold? How did the Lord correct Peter's misconceptions?
7. Read the passage 9:1-13. Explain the significance of Jesus' robes turning dazzling white. Explain the significance of the disappearance of Elijah and Moses.
8. Review the whole passage (8:1-9:32), noting where the disciples show spiritual insight and where they show spiritual blindness. Which is more prevalent, insight or blindness? Explain how the healing of the blind man in 8:22-26 might be an illustration of the normal process of a Christian's spiritual enlightenment.

STUDY 8 - BLESSED ARE THE CHILDREN

READ: Mark 9:33 - 10:52

INTRODUCTION

We complicate our lives with many things that weigh us down and separate us from God's grace. The desire for prominence, the love of wealth, pride - - - these things prevent us from experiencing the goodness of God. The Lord Jesus gives us at least two bits of advice in this regard. First, cut off everything that would lead us into sin and away from God. Second, become like little children, unencumbered by pride and ambition, and freely and joyfully receive all the good things found in His kingdom.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read Mark 9:33-35 & 10:35-45. Explain the Christian view of leadership. How does this differ from the view of leadership most commonly held in our society? How might things be different in our country if the Christian view prevailed among government leaders? How might things be different in our churches if this view prevailed among church leaders?
2. Consider 9:36-37 & 10:13-16. What attitude do you think motivated the disciples to rebuke those who were bringing their children to Jesus? What childlike characteristic(s) is it essential to have in order to receive the kingdom of God?
3. Why did John and the other disciples want to prevent others from casting out demons in Jesus' name (9:38-41)? What did the Lord say in response to John's report? What might His teaching here say about how we should view people from other Christian denominations?
4. Consider 9:42-50. Does Jesus actually want us to maim ourselves in order to keep from sinning? What point is He making with this strong hyperbolic language?
5. How would you summarize the Lord's attitude toward marriage and divorce according to 10:1-12? Did He emphasize that which is permissible or that which is ideal?
6. Consider 10:17-31. Did the young man really keep all the commandments as he claimed? Do you see a relationship between Jesus' command to the young man in V21 and the teaching in 9:43-48? What is the Christian view of wealth?
7. Read 10:46-52. What indication is there in this story that blind Bartimaeus had great faith? Can we learn something about prayer from the example of Bartimaeus? Explain.

STUDY 9 - HOSANNA

READ: Mark 11:1 - 33

INTRODUCTION

In this passage, the King of Peace enters His holy capital Jerusalem. As He enters, the people put on a good performance, shouting loud "Hosannas" and spreading cloaks and fresh - cut fronds before Him. But when he looks closer, the Lord finds no fruit to correspond to their outward show of devotion. The temple, though rich in adornment and bustling with activity, is nothing better than a den of thieves. The religious leaders, though pretending to uphold truth and righteousness, are nothing more than opportunists seeking above all to retain their own position and authority.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How do you think the disciples felt as they were commandeering the colt (V1-6)? Picture the scene in your mind's eye.
2. Compare V7-10 with Zechariah 9:9—10. How did the people recognize that Jesus was coming into the city as a King? What sort of a King was He that He would ride on a colt and not on a horse?
3. Consider V11-19. In the Bible, God's people (the Jews) are often pictured as a fig tree. How were the Jews in Jesus' day like the fig tree Jesus cursed? How were His actions toward the Jews similar to His actions toward the fig tree? What sort of fruit is the Lord looking for among His people today?
4. What is the one great prerequisite for effective prayer (V20-24)? How do we exercise and increase our faith?
5. What other prerequisite for effective prayer is found in V25? Why is this particular thing important with regard to prayer?
6. Consider V27-33. In what characteristic way does the Lord Jesus answer the question of the chief priests and elders? What does Jesus' question reveal about the motives of these religious leaders? Why does the Lord refuse to answer their question?

STUDY 10 - DAY OF QUESTIONS

READ: Mark 12: 1 - 44

INTRODUCTION

Mark 12 records the events of a day of questions for the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the teachers of the Law all have their turn at testing the Lord. But ultimately it is He who tests them. Having skillfully rebuffed their every attempt to trap Him, He silenced them and asked a final question of His own. In essence "How great must Christ, the descendant and heir of David, be if even David called him Lord?"

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Consider V1-12. If we assume this parable refers to the history of God's relationship with His people Israel, who does the owner of the vineyard represent? The farmers? The servants? The Son?
2. In what way does the parable of the vineyard appear to be untrue to life? What does this tell us about the nature of God?
3. What was the trap that the Pharisees and Herodians were attempting to lay for the Lord Jesus (V13-17)? How did he avoid their trap? What things rightly belong to the government? What things rightly belong to God?
4. Read V18-27. At what point was the Sadducees' understanding of the doctrine of the resurrection flawed? How did the Lord correct their misunderstanding? (See also I Corinthians 15:35-44) Explain how he proved the doctrine of the resurrection to be true.
5. Did the teacher in V28-34 have a proper or improper attitude toward the Lord Jesus? At the end of this incident it says, "no one dared ask Him any more questions." (V34) What was so unsettling about Jesus' interaction with this teacher?
6. Augustine said, "Love and do as you please." Comment on the accuracy of this saying in the light of V28-34.
7. How does the Lord turn the tables on His questioners in V35-37? What is the answer to His question?
8. Consider V41-44. How do people usually judge the value of offerings or gifts given? How does God judge the value of such things?

STUDY 11 - WATCH AND BE READY

READ: Mark 13:1 - 37

INTRODUCTION

This passage, called the Olivet Discourse, is one of the more puzzling sections of Mark's Gospel. The big question is: does this passage speak of the historical destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Roman armies in 70 A.D., does it refer to the events surrounding the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ, or does it somehow point to both events at the same time?

The last option is probably correct. When Jesus came to earth the first time as the Messiah, the Jewish people in general, and their religious leaders in particular, rejected him. In 70 A.D. God destroyed Jerusalem, their capital city, as a judgement against them. In the end times mankind as a whole will reject Christ by following false "Christs." This will bring upon them God's ultimate judgement at the return of Christ. The historical fall of Jerusalem, therefore, is like a foreshadowing or a "type" of the coming final judgement of God upon all mankind. Thus the two events can be described as one, with the emphasis at one point being on the historical event and at another on the final consummation.

It is interesting to note that the early Christians of Jerusalem listened to the warning given by the Lord in V14. When they saw the events the Lord predicted happening, they fled to Pella, a town in the mountains on the other side of the Jordan. And so they escaped the terrors of God's outpoured wrath. How much more should we, who most probably live at the end of times, obey the warning of this oracle: "Watch and be ready."

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. With what sort of feeling must the disciple have said what he did in V1? How must he have felt after hearing Jesus' statement in V2? How might this have been helpful to him spiritually?
2. Identify the two parts of the question asked by Peter and the others in V4.
3. Consider V5-13. List the signs that are "the beginning of birth pains." How many of these signs do you see clear evidence of today? In what ways are we told to respond when we see these various things happening?
4. Describe the situation or atmosphere that will prevail during the Great Tribulation as outlined in V14-20. What is the only reasonable way to respond to the events described here?
5. Consider V21-28. According to this passage how will we be able to distinguish between the coming of false Christs and the coming of the Lord Jesus? How would you respond to someone who claimed (and many do!) that Jesus Christ has already returned, but invisibly?
6. What is the point of the parable of the fig tree in V28-31?
7. In V32-37 the Lord answers the first part of the question the disciples asked in V 4. How does he answer the question? In the light of this answer what is it important always to be?
8. What particular actions and attitudes will show that we are being watchful as the Lord commanded?

STUDY 12 - ARRESTED

READ: Mark 14: 1 - 72

INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist, prophesying about the Lord Jesus, wrote:

*All my enemies whisper together against me;
they imagine the worst for me...
Even my close friend, whom I trusted,
he who shared my bread,
has lifted up his heel against me.*

(Psalm 41:7, 9)

Mark 14 contains the fulfillment of this prophecy. The enemies of the Lord plot to capture him by devious means and they succeed, coming after him with clubs and swords in the dark of night as if he were a common criminal. Once captured they bring false witnesses against him and condemn him to death. Tragically he finds no support from his friends. They rebuke a woman who honours him. One of his own disciples betrays him. The rest deny they know him. And all the while he is suffering for them, both enemy and friend.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Consider V1-11. Why were some of those present upset at the woman with the perfume? In what way was their evaluation of her action flawed? What can we lavish upon the Lord Jesus today to show our love and gratitude to him?
2. Read V12-16. What purpose do you think was served by the unusual way the Lord sent out his disciples here? (Compare with Mark 11:1-6) How must they have felt when they discovered everything exactly as he had predicted?
3. Do you think the disciples knew the significance of the Lord Jesus' actions in V22-26? What significance do his actions have for us?
4. What two unsettling predictions did the Lord make about his disciples in V18 and 27-31? How did they respond in each case? Might they have responded in a better manner? What feeling does Peter's strenuous denial (V31) probably betray?
5. How did the prospect of his death affect the Lord Jesus? (V32-42) It would seem that lesser men have faced death with greater composure. What was different about the death of the Lord Jesus?
6. Jesus prayed that "this cup" (representing his crucifixion) might be taken from Him (V36); yet it wasn't. Should we conclude that his prayer wasn't answered? Why not?
7. Read V43-65. Compare the way the Lord conducts Himself towards His arresters and accusers with the way they conduct themselves toward Him. What are the major differences?
8. Consider V66 -72. Why did Peter deny the Lord? Can we be guilty of denying him for similar reasons in parallel circumstances? Explain.

STUDY 13 - DEAD AND RISEN

READ: Mark 15:1 - 16:20

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark reaches its swift climax in these final two chapters. The apparent downfall of Jesus of Nazareth seems to drive men mad with spite towards Him. The crowds, egged on by the Chief Priests, shout "Crucify Him" with mindless intensity. The soldiers, the passerby, the religious leaders, and even those being crucified with Jesus heap upon him mocking scorn. Yet their fit of hatred and mockery dies when He does, and then a different attitude prevails. The centurion in charge says, "Surely this man was the Son of God." Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple, finally decides this dead teacher is worth taking a stand for. And these last opinions prove true, for on the third day the stone is rolled away, the grave is empty and Jesus is risen.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What did Pilate find amazing about the conduct of the Lord Jesus? (V1-5) Why did he conduct himself in this manner?
2. Consider V6-15. Did Pilate believe Jesus to be guilty? Why did he hand the Lord over to be crucified? How does Pilate measure up as a judge according to the standard of Proverbs 17:15?
3. What did the soldiers think of Jesus' claim to be King of the Jews (V16-20).
4. List the groups of people who mocked the Lord Jesus in V21-32. What was the focus of their mockery?
5. There is a measure of truth in the statement made by the Chief Priests and teachers of the Law V31. In what sense couldn't Jesus save Himself?
6. What reaction did the death of the Lord Jesus evoke in the centurion who was overseeing the crucifixion? (V33-39)? What response did His death evoke in Joseph of Arimathea (V42-47) (See also John 19:38)? How might an understanding of the Lord Jesus' death evoke a similar response in people today?
7. Consider 16:1-8. What proof did the women have that Jesus had truly risen from the dead? What command did the angel give to the women? How does this command apply to us?