

Mark

1

Summary: *Mark 1 opens with the ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance and preparing the way for the one coming after him. Jesus arrives from Nazareth, is baptized by John, and the Spirit descends on him like a dove while a voice from heaven declares him God's beloved Son. The Spirit immediately drives Jesus into the wilderness for forty days of testing. After John's arrest, Jesus begins his public ministry in Galilee, announcing that the kingdom of God has drawn near. He calls his first disciples — Simon, Andrew, James, and John — then demonstrates his authority through exorcisms, healings, and teaching in Capernaum and throughout Galilee. The chapter culminates with Jesus healing a leper and being unable to enter towns openly because of the growing crowds.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Mark's Gospel begins without a birth narrative or genealogy, plunging directly into the action with John the Baptist. The word euthys ('immediately') appears repeatedly — a hallmark of Mark's urgent, fast-paced narrative style. The messianic secret theme emerges early: Jesus commands demons and the healed leper to remain silent about his identity. The opening verse may function as a title for the entire Gospel. Mark's Jesus is a man of decisive action who teaches with authority unlike the scribes, and whose identity the demons recognize even as humans struggle to comprehend it.*

Translation Friction: *The opening quotation in verses 2-3 is attributed to 'Isaiah the prophet' but actually combines Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Some manuscripts read 'in the prophets' to avoid this difficulty, but the SBLGNT follows the harder reading. We render the Greek as given. The phrase 'Son of God' in verse 1 is absent from some early manuscripts (notably Sinaiticus); we include it following the SBLGNT. Mark's abrupt transitions and paratactic style ('and... and... and...') are smoothed slightly in English while preserving the narrative urgency.*

Connections: *The opening quotation from Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 frames Jesus's arrival as the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic hope for God's return to his people. The wilderness setting evokes Israel's exodus experience. The Spirit's descent at baptism recalls Genesis 1:2 (the Spirit hovering over the waters). The forty days of testing parallel Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Moses's forty days on Sinai. Jesus's authority over unclean spirits and disease demonstrates the in-breaking of God's kingdom that he announces.*

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way." ³"A voice crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" ⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "One who is more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Immediately, as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." ¹²Immediately the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, being tested by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him. ¹⁴After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵Saying, The time is fulfilled, and God's kingdom is drawing near. Repent you, and believe the gospel. ¹⁶As he passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." ¹⁸Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in their boat mending their nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired workers and went after him. ²¹They went to Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and began teaching. ²²They were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, ²⁴"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!" ²⁵Jesus rebuked it, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" ²⁶The unclean spirit convulsed the man, screamed with a loud voice, and came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸Immediately the news about him spread everywhere throughout the whole surrounding region of Galilee. ²⁹Immediately after leaving the synagogue, they went to the house of Simon and Andrew, along with James and John. ³⁰Simon's mother-in-law was lying ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began serving them. ³²That evening, after the sun had set, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. ³³The whole town was gathered at the door. ³⁴He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and withdrew to a deserted place, and there he was praying. ³⁶Simon and those with him searched for him, ³⁷After they had found him, they stated to him, All men seek for you. ³⁸He said to them, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." ³⁹So he went throughout all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. ⁴⁰A man with a skin disease came to him, kneeling and begging him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹Moved with compassion, he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean." ⁴²Immediately the skin disease left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³Jesus sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, ⁴⁴Says to him, See you say nothing to any man — but go your way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer since your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. ⁴⁵But the man went out and began to proclaim it widely and spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed out in deserted places. Yet people came to him from everywhere.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek euangelion ('good news, gospel') was not originally a religious term — in the Roman world it referred to imperial proclamations, especially announcements of military victory or a new emperor's accession. Mark's use of it for Jesus is a counter-imperial claim. The phrase may function as a title for the entire book rather than the first sentence of a narrative.

1. The phrase 'Son of God' (huiou theou) is absent from Codex Sinaiticus and a few other witnesses, but the SBLGNT includes it. If original, it frames the entire Gospel with a christological declaration that the narrative will progressively unfold.
2. This verse actually quotes Malachi 3:1 (combined with Exodus 23:20), not Isaiah. The Isaiah quotation comes in verse 3. Mark attributes the composite quotation to Isaiah, likely because Isaiah was the more prominent prophet and the primary source. Some later manuscripts changed 'Isaiah the prophet' to 'the prophets' to resolve the difficulty, but the SBLGNT preserves the harder reading.
2. The Greek *angelos* ('messenger') is the same word used for 'angel.' Here it refers to John the Baptist as God's human messenger.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Malachi 3:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 23:20. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. This quotes Isaiah 40:3 from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew original, the phrase division is 'A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD' — the wilderness is where the road is built, not where the voice cries. The Septuagint and Mark connect 'in the wilderness' with the voice, which conveniently describes John's actual location. The Greek *euthys* ('straight') here is an adjective, different from the adverb *euthys* ('immediately') that will become Mark's signature word.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 40:3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The Greek *egeneto Iōannēs ho baptizōn* ('there appeared John the one baptizing') introduces John as a figure bursting onto the scene. Mark uses his characteristic participial style. The word *metanoia* ('repentance') means a fundamental change of mind and direction, corresponding to the Hebrew *teshuvah* ('return'). *Aphesis hamartōn* ('forgiveness/release of sins') uses *aphesis*, which carries the sense of release or liberation — as in releasing a prisoner or canceling a debt.
5. The 'all' (*pasa, pantes*) is hyperbolic, a common Semitic literary device emphasizing the magnitude of the response. The imperfect tenses (*exeporeueto, ebaptizonto*) indicate ongoing, repeated action — the crowds kept coming and kept being baptized. *Exomologoumenoi* ('confessing') is a present participle indicating that confession accompanied the act of baptism.
6. John's appearance deliberately echoes Elijah's description in 2 Kings 1:8 ('a man wearing a garment of hair with a leather belt around his waist'). Mark presents John as the returning Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5, a connection Jesus makes explicit later (9:13). Locusts were a permissible food under Levitical law (Leviticus 11:22) and remain part of the diet in some regions of the Middle East today.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 2 Kings 1:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Malachi 4:5. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 11:22. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Untying sandals was a task considered too menial even for a Hebrew slave — a rabbinic tradition held that a disciple must do everything for his teacher except remove his sandals. John claims he is not even worthy of the task that was beneath a slave. The comparative *ischyroteros* ('more powerful') is emphatic — John is not describing a slight superiority but an incomparable difference in status and power.
8. The contrast between water and Spirit baptism is stark. The pronoun *ego* ('I') and *autos* ('he') are both emphatic in Greek, creating a sharp personal contrast. Mark omits 'and fire' found in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16, focusing solely on the Spirit. The verb *baptizō* literally means 'to immerse, to dip' — the Spirit baptism implies being immersed in God's Spirit.
9. Mark introduces Jesus abruptly — no birth narrative, no genealogy, no childhood. He simply arrives from the obscure village of Nazareth. The phrase *en ekeinaiis tais hēmeraiis* ('in those days') is a general temporal marker connecting Jesus's appearance to John's ministry. The preposition *eis* ('into') with the Jordan may suggest full immersion, though the preposition alone is not conclusive.
10. This is the first occurrence of Mark's characteristic *euthys* ('immediately, at once'), which appears over forty times in this Gospel, creating a sense of urgency and rapid action. The Greek *schizomenous* ('being torn, split') is much more violent than 'opened' — it is the same root used for the tearing of the temple curtain at Jesus's death (15:38). Mark depicts not a gentle opening but a forceful rending of the barrier between heaven and earth. The vision is described as Jesus's experience — 'he saw' (*eiden*) — making it a personal revelation rather than a public spectacle in Mark's account.
11. Mark's version addresses Jesus directly ('You are') rather than speaking about him in the third person ('This is') as in Matthew 3:17. The declaration combines Psalm 2:7 ('You are my Son') — a royal enthronement psalm — with Isaiah 42:1 ('my chosen one, in whom my soul delights') — the first Servant Song. Jesus is thus identified simultaneously as the Davidic king and the Suffering Servant, two strands that Mark's Gospel will weave together throughout. The Greek *agapētos* ('beloved') may also carry the sense of 'only' or 'unique,' echoing Genesis 22:2 where Isaac is called Abraham's 'beloved son.'

11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 2:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 42:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 22:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The verb *ekballei* ('drives out, casts out, expels') is startlingly forceful — it is the same word Mark uses for casting out demons. The Spirit does not lead or guide Jesus into the wilderness; he is thrust there. Mark's use of the historical present tense (*ekballei* rather than the aorist) makes the action vivid and immediate. The wilderness (*erēmos*) connects to the wilderness motifs of Exodus and Isaiah 40.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 40. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. Mark compresses what Matthew and Luke expand into three specific temptations into a single, vivid summary. The 'forty days' echoes Israel's forty years in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2), Moses's forty days on Sinai (Exodus 34:28), and Elijah's forty-day journey to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). The detail about wild animals (*thērion*) is unique to Mark and may evoke either danger or the Edenic peace of Isaiah 11:6-9 where the messianic figure restores harmony with the animal kingdom. The Greek *peirazomenos* can mean 'tempted' or 'tested' — we use 'tested' to capture the broader sense of being put to the proof.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 8:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 34:28 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 19:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 11:6-9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The Greek *paradothēnai* ('to be handed over, arrested') is the same verb used later for Jesus's own betrayal and arrest (14:10, 41). Mark subtly foreshadows that the fate of the forerunner will become the fate of the one he announced. The phrase 'good news of God' (*euangelion tou theou*) means the good news that comes from God, about God, or both — the genitive is intentionally ambiguous.
15. The Greek *kairos* ('time') denotes an appointed or decisive moment, distinct from *chronos* (ordinary sequential time). The perfect tense *peplērōtai* ('has been fulfilled') indicates a completed action with ongoing significance — the decisive moment has arrived and remains in effect. The perfect tense *ēngiken* ('has drawn near') similarly indicates that the kingdom has arrived at the threshold and remains there. The two imperatives — *metanoete* ('repent') and *pisteuete* ('believe') — form the twofold human response to the kingdom's arrival.
16. The Greek *thalassa* ('sea') is technically a lake (Lake Gennesaret/Kinneret), but the Gospels consistently call it a 'sea,' which reflects local usage. The verb *amphiballontas* ('casting a net') is a technical fishing term — casting a circular hand net. Mark introduces Simon without explanation, suggesting his audience already knew who Simon Peter was.
17. The call narrative is remarkably brief — no prior conversation, no credentials, no negotiation. The metaphor 'fishers of people' (*halieis anthrōpōn*) draws on their existing vocation but transforms it. The plural *anthrōpōn* ('of people') is rendered inclusively rather than with the gendered 'of men,' since the Greek *anthrōpos* refers to human beings generally.
18. The word *euthys* ('immediately') again emphasizes the instantaneous nature of the response. The verb *aphentes* ('leaving, abandoning') conveys a decisive break. The aorist tense *ēkolouthēsan* ('followed') marks the beginning of a new course of life. The cost of discipleship is implicit — nets represent livelihood, investment, and family trade.
19. The verb *katartizontas* ('mending, preparing, making ready') suggests the brothers were repairing or preparing their nets for the next fishing trip — they were in the middle of their workday. James is named before John, likely indicating he was the elder brother.
20. Again *euthys* ('immediately') underscores the urgency of Jesus's call and the decisiveness of the response. The mention of hired workers (*misthōtōn*) is unique to Mark and indicates that Zebedee's fishing business was substantial enough to employ laborers — James and John were not destitute. Their leaving is therefore a sacrifice of relative comfort, not desperation.
21. Mark shifts to the historical present tense (*eisporeuontai*, 'they enter') for vivid narration, then back to the aorist. Capernaum (Kfar Nahum, 'village of Nahum') served as Jesus's base of operations in Galilee. The imperfect *edidasken* ('he was teaching') indicates ongoing or repeated action — he taught at length, not just a brief remark.
22. The Greek *exeplēssonto* ('were astonished, were struck out of their senses') is stronger than mild surprise — it conveys being overwhelmed or stunned. The scribes typically taught by citing prior rabbinic authorities ('Rabbi Hillel says... Rabbi Shammai says...'). Jesus taught on his own authority, without appealing to tradition. The noun *exousia* ('authority, power, right') implies both the right to speak and the power behind the words.

23. The phrase 'in an unclean spirit' (en pneumatī akathartō) describes the man as being under the spirit's domination — literally 'in' its sphere of influence. The unclean spirit's presence in the synagogue is jarring — the place of worship is invaded by the impure. Mark's use of euthys here connects the teaching about authority directly to the demonstration of that authority.
24. The phrase ti hēmin kai soi ('what to us and to you?') is a Semitic idiom meaning 'what business do we have with each other?' or 'leave us alone.' The spirit alternates between plural ('us') and singular ('I know'), perhaps speaking for the entire demonic realm. The title 'Holy One of God' (ho hagios tou theou) demonstrates supernatural knowledge of Jesus's identity — a key element in Mark's messianic secret theme. The spirit's recognition contrasts sharply with human incomprehension throughout the Gospel.
25. The verb epetimēsen ('rebuked') carries the force of a commanding reprimand. The imperative phimōthēti ('be muzzled, be silenced') is vivid — literally 'be muzzled' as one would muzzle an animal. Jesus's first miracle in Mark is an exorcism, establishing that his ministry is fundamentally a conflict with evil powers. The command to silence is the first instance of the messianic secret — Jesus does not want his identity proclaimed by demons.
26. The verb sparaxan ('convulsed, tore at, threw into spasms') describes violent physical distress. The spirit's departure is not quiet or easy — it is violent and loud, demonstrating both the spirit's malice and Jesus's superior power. Despite the spirit's resistance, it cannot disobey Jesus's command.
27. The Greek ethambēthēsan ('were amazed, alarmed, astonished') conveys not just wonder but a sense of alarm or awe — something unsettling has happened. The crowd links Jesus's teaching and his exorcism as two expressions of the same authority (exousia). The adjective kainē ('new') can mean new in kind (qualitatively unprecedented) rather than merely new in time — this is teaching unlike anything they have encountered.
28. The Greek akoē ('report, news, fame, what is heard') literally means 'the hearing' — what people were saying and hearing about Jesus. Again euthys ('immediately') drives the narrative forward. The geographic scope — 'the whole surrounding region of Galilee' — shows how rapidly Jesus's reputation expanded.
29. Again euthys marks the rapid transition. The four disciples just called now accompany Jesus. The house of Simon and Andrew in Capernaum becomes a base of operations. Archaeological excavations at Capernaum have identified a first-century house beneath the later 'Church of St. Peter' that tradition associates with this location.
30. The detail that Simon had a mother-in-law presupposes he was married, a detail Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians 9:5. The verb katekeito ('was lying down') indicates she was bedridden. The impersonal 'they told him' reflects Mark's characteristic vagueness about who exactly is speaking.
31. The verb ēgeiren ('raised') is the same verb used for resurrection throughout the New Testament. Mark may intend a double meaning — Jesus 'raises' Simon's mother-in-law from her sickbed, foreshadowing the greater raising to come. The verb diēkonei ('she was serving') uses the root from which 'deacon' comes; her immediate service demonstrates both complete healing and a model of discipleship as responsive service.
32. The double time reference — 'evening' and 'after the sun had set' — is significant: the Sabbath ended at sundown, and only then could people carry the sick without violating Sabbath law. Mark shows the community's eagerness by noting they came as soon as they legally could. The distinction between those who are 'sick' (kakōs echontas, 'having it badly') and 'demon-possessed' (daimonizomenous) maintains two categories of affliction.
33. Another Markan hyperbole — 'the whole town' (holē hē polis) creates a vivid image of the entire community crowding around the doorway of Simon's house. The periphrastic construction (ēn episynēgmenē) emphasizes the state of being gathered rather than the act of gathering — they were assembled and waiting.
34. The shift from 'all' (v. 32) to 'many' (pollous) has been debated — does Mark mean he healed many but not all? More likely 'many' simply describes the large number healed from the large crowd brought. The silencing of demons (ouk ēphien lalein, 'he was not allowing them to speak') continues the messianic secret motif. The reason given — 'because they knew him' (hoti ēdeisan auton) — confirms that the demons possess supernatural knowledge of Jesus's identity that Jesus does not want publicly proclaimed at this stage.
35. The piling up of temporal markers — prōi ('early morning'), ennycha ('while still night'), lian ('very') — emphasizes just how early Jesus rose. After the intense demands of the previous day, Jesus seeks solitude for prayer. Mark records Jesus praying at three key moments: here, at Gethsemane (14:32-42), and possibly by implication at other points. The imperfect prosēucheto ('he was praying') indicates extended, ongoing prayer, not a brief petition.
36. The verb katediōxen ('pursued, hunted down, tracked') is much stronger than 'followed' — it implies an urgent, determined search. The KJV's 'followed after' is too gentle. Simon takes the initiative, already emerging as the leader and spokesman of the group.
37. The disciples' report — 'everyone is looking for you' (pantes zētousin se) — reveals their expectation: the crowds want more miracles, and Jesus should return to meet the demand. The verb zēteō ('to seek, search for') is neutral here but will carry negative connotations later in Mark when opponents 'seek' to arrest Jesus.
38. The word kōmopoleis ('market-towns') describes settlements larger than villages but smaller than cities — the small towns of rural Galilee. Jesus resists the pull of popular demand in Capernaum, insisting his mission extends beyond one location. The phrase eis touto gar exēlthon ('for this is why I came out') is ambiguous — 'came out' could mean from Capernaum, from his prayer retreat, or from God (a statement of divine mission). The ambiguity may be deliberate.

39. This verse serves as a summary statement for Jesus's early Galilean ministry, linking proclamation and exorcism as the twin activities that characterize his mission. The synagogues were the natural venues for a traveling teacher, and their mention 'throughout all Galilee' indicates a comprehensive itinerant ministry.
40. The Greek *lepros* traditionally rendered 'leper' covers a range of skin conditions described in Leviticus 13-14, not limited to modern Hansen's disease. 'Skin disease' is more accurate to the biblical category. The man's statement is remarkable — he does not doubt Jesus's power ('you can') but only questions his willingness ('if you are willing'). Kneeling (*gonypetōn*) expresses desperate supplication. Under Levitical law, a person with such a disease was ritually unclean and excluded from community life.
40. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 13-14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
41. The Greek *splanchnistheis* ('moved with compassion') derives from *splanchna* ('intestines, bowels'), indicating a deep, visceral emotional response — compassion felt in the gut. Some manuscripts read *orgistheis* ('moved with anger') instead, which would describe anger at the disease or the system that ostracized the man. The SBLGNT follows the compassion reading. The physical touch is the most striking detail — by touching a ritually unclean person, Jesus would normally contract uncleanness himself. Instead, the cleanness flows in the opposite direction.
42. The dual statement — the disease 'left' (*apēlthen*) and he 'was made clean' (*ekatharisthē*) — addresses both the physical condition and the ritual status. Healing and cleansing are distinct: the disease departs (medical), and the person is restored to cleanness (ritual/social). The word *euthys* again emphasizes the instantaneous nature of Jesus's healing power.
43. The verb *embrimēsamenos* ('sternly warned, snorted with indignation') is a strong word that implies deep emotion — it is used of horses snorting. The intensity is puzzling: why such a forceful warning after a compassionate healing? Some scholars suggest Jesus was moved by anger at the disease, the social system that excluded the man, or the situation that would unfold if the healing became public. The verb *exebalen* ('sent away, cast out') is the same word used for casting out demons, adding to the forcefulness of the scene.
44. The command to silence (the messianic secret) is combined with a command to obey the Levitical purification procedure of Leviticus 14:1-32. Jesus does not abolish the law but upholds it. The phrase *eis martyriōn autois* ('as a testimony to them') is ambiguous — 'to them' could refer to the priests (as proof of healing), to the people (as evidence of God's power), or as a witness against the religious establishment. The double negative *mēdeni mēden* ('to no one, nothing') is emphatic — absolute silence is demanded.
44. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 14:1-32. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
45. The healed man's disobedience has ironic consequences — he does what Jesus commanded him not to do (proclaim the healing) and presumably neglects what Jesus commanded him to do (go to the priest). The verb *diaphēmizein* ('to spread abroad, make known far and wide') indicates enthusiastic, widespread broadcasting. The result inverts the leper's situation: the formerly excluded man now moves freely in society while Jesus, who touched the unclean, now remains outside in deserted places. Yet even in isolation, the crowds find him — the messianic secret cannot be contained.

2

Summary: *Mark 2 presents a series of five controversy stories that escalate tension between Jesus and the religious authorities. Jesus heals a paralytic and forgives his sins, provoking accusations of blasphemy. He calls Levi the tax collector and eats with sinners, scandalizing the Pharisees. Questions arise about fasting and Sabbath observance. Through these encounters, Jesus reveals himself as one with authority to forgive sins, as a physician for the sick rather than the righteous, and as lord of the Sabbath.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The five controversy stories in chapters 2-3 follow a chiastic or escalating pattern common in ancient rhetoric. The paralytic's healing is the first time Jesus explicitly claims divine prerogative (forgiving sins). The 'Son of Man' title appears here for the first time in Mark — Jesus's preferred self-designation, drawn from Daniel 7:13-14. The grain-plucking episode reveals Jesus's interpretive method: he appeals to narrative precedent (David) rather than legal technicality, subordinating Sabbath regulation to human need.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'Son of Man' (ho huīos tou anthrōpou) is notoriously difficult — it can mean simply 'a human being' (as in Ezekiel), or it can evoke the heavenly figure of Daniel 7. In Mark, Jesus uses it with both ordinary and exalted connotations. We render it literally and note the ambiguity. The identity of 'Levi son of Alphaeus' and his relationship to Matthew and to 'James son of Alphaeus' among the Twelve remains debated.*

Connections: The forgiveness of sins connects to Isaiah's new exodus themes (Isaiah 43:25). Jesus's table fellowship with sinners enacts the eschatological banquet. The David and showbread episode (1 Samuel 21:1-6) establishes a precedent for human need superseding ritual law. The bridegroom metaphor echoes Old Testament imagery of God as Israel's husband (Hosea 2, Isaiah 54).

¹When he returned to Capernaum after some days, word got out that he was at home. ²So many gathered that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he was speaking the word to them. ³Some people came bringing a paralyzed man to him, carried by four men. ⁴Since they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where he was, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins except God alone?" ⁸Immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they were reasoning this way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier — to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the paralyzed man — ¹¹"I say to you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home." ¹²He got up, immediately picked up his mat, and went out in front of everyone, so that they were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" ¹³He went out again beside the sea, and the whole crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. ¹⁵As Jesus reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were dining with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." ¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. ²¹No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise the new patch pulls away from the old, and the tear becomes worse. ²²And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Instead, new wine is for fresh wineskins." ²³One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick heads of grain as they made their way. ²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him — ²⁶How he traveled into the home of God in the period of Abiathar the elevated priest, and did consume the shewbread, which is not lawful to consume but for the priests, and offered as well to them which were with him? ²⁷Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *en oikō estin* can mean 'in a house' or 'at home,' suggesting Capernaum had become Jesus's home base — likely Simon and Andrew's house from 1:29. The passive *ēkousthē* ('it was heard') vividly captures how news travels in a small town.
2. The phrase *ton logon* ('the word') in Mark refers to the message of the kingdom — the good news Jesus proclaimed in 1:14-15. The imperfect *elalei* ('he was speaking') indicates ongoing teaching when the interruption of the next verse occurs. The overcrowding sets the stage for the dramatic entry through the roof.
3. Mark's historical present (*erchontai*, 'they come') creates immediacy. The detail of 'four' carriers is unique to Mark, adding eyewitness specificity. The Greek *paralytikos* describes someone with paralysis or severe motor impairment.
4. Palestinian houses typically had flat roofs made of wooden beams covered with branches, mud, and packed earth, accessible by an exterior staircase. The verb *exoryxantes* ('having dug through') indicates the physical labor of breaking through this material. The *krabattos* ('mat, pallet') was a poor person's bed — a simple mat rather than a proper bed frame. The determination of the four friends is extraordinary and becomes a model of faith in

action.

5. Jesus sees 'their faith' (tēn pistin autōn) — the faith of the four friends, not just the paralytic. Faith in Mark is often corporate and active, not merely individual belief. The address teknon ('child') is tender and personal. The present passive aphientai ('are being forgiven') is a divine passive — God is the implied agent, and Jesus speaks with God's authority. The crowd came for a healing; Jesus addresses a deeper need first.
6. The scribes' objection is internal — dialogizomenoi en tais kardiais ('reasoning in their hearts') — not spoken aloud. This makes Jesus's response in verse 8 all the more striking, since he perceives their unspoken thoughts. The verb dialogizomai can mean 'to reason, debate, question' and here carries a tone of hostile deliberation.
7. The scribes' theological logic is sound: in Jewish theology, only God can forgive sins (cf. Isaiah 43:25, 'I, I am he who blots out your transgressions'). Their accusation of blasphemy (blasphēmei) is the most serious religious charge possible. The irony in Mark is that the reader knows from 1:1 that Jesus is the Son of God — the scribes are theologically correct about who can forgive sins, but wrong about who is standing before them.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 43:25. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The phrase epignous tō pneumati autou ('perceiving in his spirit') describes supernatural insight — Jesus knows their unspoken thoughts. The word euthys ('immediately') again marks the swift narrative pace. Jesus's question does not deny their premise (that only God forgives sins) but challenges them to draw the right conclusion from it.
9. Jesus's question is a masterful argument: pronouncing forgiveness is 'easier' to say because no one can verify it, while commanding a paralytic to walk demands visible proof. By performing the harder, verifiable act, Jesus validates the easier, unverifiable one. The logic assumes that the power to heal and the power to forgive both come from the same divine source.
10. This is the first appearance of 'Son of Man' (ho huios tou anthrōpou) in Mark. The title is drawn from Daniel 7:13-14, where 'one like a son of man' receives dominion and authority from God. In Aramaic, 'son of man' (bar enash) can also simply mean 'a human being.' Jesus uses the title to make a veiled claim — those who know Daniel will recognize the authority claim, while others may hear only a self-reference. The phrase 'on earth' (epi tēs gēs) may emphasize that this divine authority is now operative on earth, not only in heaven.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 7:13-14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The emphatic soi legō ('to you I say') places the full weight of Jesus's authority behind the command. Three imperatives follow in rapid succession: egeire ('get up'), aron ('pick up'), hypage ('go'). The command to go home implies full restoration — the man can now resume his place in family and community life.
12. The healing is instantaneous and complete — the man performs all three commanded actions. The verb existasthai ('to be astounded, beside oneself') is stronger than ordinary amazement; it suggests being overwhelmed to the point of losing composure. The crowd's response — glorifying God — is the correct theological interpretation of what they have witnessed. Their exclamation 'we have never seen anything like this' confirms the unprecedented nature of Jesus's ministry.
13. This transitional verse moves the setting from the house to the seaside. The imperfect tenses (ērchetō, edidasken) indicate continuous, repeated action — the crowds kept coming, and Jesus kept teaching. The seaside becomes a recurring venue for Jesus's teaching in Mark (cf. 3:7, 4:1).
14. The call of Levi mirrors the call of the fishermen in 1:16-20 — Jesus sees, calls, and the person immediately follows. The telōnion ('tax booth, customs post') was where tolls were collected on goods passing through. Levi was likely a toll collector for Herod Antipas rather than a direct agent of Rome, but the occupation was despised nonetheless as collaborationist and prone to corruption. The relationship between this Levi and the apostle Matthew (cf. Matthew 9:9) is uncertain — Mark never identifies them as the same person.
15. The phrase 'in his house' (en tē oikia autou) is ambiguous — it could be Levi's house or Jesus's house. Given the context of Levi's call, Levi's house is more likely. The verb synaneekeinto ('were reclining together') describes the Greco-Roman dining posture of reclining on couches. Shared meals in the ancient world signified acceptance and fellowship. The category 'sinners' (hamartōloi) likely refers to those whose occupations or lifestyles placed them outside the boundaries of Torah observance as defined by the Pharisees.
16. The phrase 'scribes of the Pharisees' (hoi grammateis tōn Pharisaiōn) designates legal scholars aligned with the Pharisaic movement specifically. They address the disciples rather than Jesus directly — perhaps a social convention of indirect confrontation. The Pharisaic concern about table fellowship reflected their understanding that eating together constituted a form of religious communion; sharing a meal with the impure made one impure by association.
17. The physician metaphor reframes the entire controversy: Jesus is not endorsing sin by eating with sinners but treating a disease. The SBLGNT does not include 'to repentance' (eis metanoian), which appears in some manuscripts harmonizing with Luke 5:32. The statement 'I did not come to call the righteous' may be ironic — in Mark's theology, no one is truly righteous apart from God's action. The verb kalēsai ('to call, invite') connects to the calling of disciples — Jesus's table fellowship is itself an act of calling sinners to follow him.
18. The question groups John's disciples with the Pharisees against Jesus's disciples — a surprising alignment, since John opposed the religious establishment. The fasting in question likely refers to voluntary fasting beyond the required Day of Atonement fast, which the Pharisees practiced twice weekly (cf. Luke 18:12). The implied criticism is that Jesus's disciples are insufficiently pious.

- 19.** The phrase *hoi huioi tou nymphōnos* ('the sons of the bridal chamber') is a Semitic idiom for wedding guests, particularly the close friends of the groom. The bridegroom metaphor carries rich Old Testament resonance — God is frequently portrayed as Israel's bridegroom (Isaiah 54:5, 62:5; Hosea 2:16-20). By identifying himself as the bridegroom, Jesus implicitly claims a divine role. Jewish wedding celebrations lasted seven days, during which fasting was considered inappropriate and even prohibited.
- 19.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 54:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 19.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Hosea 2:16-20. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 20.** This is Jesus's first veiled reference to his death in Mark. The passive *aparthē* ('is taken away') implies violent removal, not voluntary departure. The sudden shift from celebration to mourning foreshadows the Passion. The phrase 'on that day' (*en ekeinē tē hēmera*) may refer specifically to the day of Jesus's death or to the entire period of his absence.
- 21.** The word *agnaphou* ('unshrunk, unfulled') refers to cloth that has not been processed by a fuller — it will shrink when washed, pulling away from the surrounding fabric. The parable illustrates that Jesus's ministry cannot simply be patched onto existing religious structures. The 'old garment' represents the current religious framework; the 'new cloth' represents what Jesus brings. The two are not merely different but incompatible.
- 22.** The *askoi* ('wineskins') were made of animal hides. Old wineskins had lost their elasticity and could not expand with the fermentation of new wine. The metaphor reinforces the previous parable: the ferment of Jesus's ministry requires entirely new containers. Mark uses two different words for 'new' — *neos* (new in time, freshly made wine) and *kainos* (new in kind, qualitatively different wineskins) — a distinction that may be theologically significant.
- 23.** The phrase *hodon poiein* ('to make a way, to make a path') combined with *tillontes tous stachyas* ('plucking the grain heads') describes the disciples pulling off grain heads as they walked through a field. Plucking grain from a neighbor's field was permitted under Deuteronomy 23:25, but the Pharisees considered it a form of 'reaping' — one of the thirty-nine categories of work prohibited on the Sabbath in later rabbinic tradition.
- 23.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 23:25 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 24.** The imperfect *elegon* ('were saying') may suggest ongoing complaint rather than a single objection. The phrase *ho ouk exestin* ('what is not lawful') frames the issue as a legal violation. The Pharisees hold Jesus responsible for his disciples' behavior, which was standard in the teacher-disciple relationship — a rabbi was accountable for his students' conduct.
- 25.** Jesus's response appeals to Scripture rather than engaging in legal debate on Pharisaic terms. The rhetorical question 'Have you never read?' (*oudepote anegnōte*) is pointed — he is asking legal experts if they know their own Scriptures. The appeal to David's precedent (1 Samuel 21:1-6) is an argument from the greater to the lesser: if David could override ritual law in a time of need, how much more can the Son of David?
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Samuel 21:1-6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 26.** The reference to 'Abiathar the high priest' poses a difficulty: according to 1 Samuel 21:1-6, the priest was Ahimelech, Abiathar's father. Various explanations have been proposed — the preposition *epi* can mean 'in the time of' (a general era reference), or this may be a genuine historical error in the tradition. The 'bread of the Presence' (*artous tēs protheseōs*) translates the Hebrew *lechem hapanim* — the twelve loaves placed before God in the tabernacle/temple weekly (Leviticus 24:5-9), restricted to priests.
- 26.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Samuel 21:1-6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 26.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 24:5-9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 27.** This revolutionary principle reorients Sabbath theology: the Sabbath is a gift designed to serve human well-being, not an institution to which humans are subordinated. The Greek *anthrōpos* ('human being') is generic, not male-specific, so 'people' captures the intended scope. A similar sentiment appears in later rabbinic literature (Mekhilta on Exodus 31:13: 'The Sabbath is handed over to you, not you to the Sabbath'), though Jesus draws a more radical conclusion in the next verse.
- 27.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 31:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 28.** The concluding claim is extraordinary: Jesus asserts authority over the Sabbath itself — an institution established by God at creation (Genesis 2:2-3). The word *kyrios* ('lord, master') denotes sovereign authority. If the Sabbath was made for humanity (v. 27), and the Son of Man has authority over it (v. 28), then Jesus claims the right to define how the Sabbath is properly observed. The word 'even' (*kai*) in 'even of the Sabbath' suggests that lordship over the Sabbath is one instance of a broader authority.
- 28.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 2:2-3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

3

Summary: *Mark 3 concludes the five controversy stories with a Sabbath healing that provokes the Pharisees to conspire with the Herodians against Jesus. Crowds from across the region press in on Jesus, and unclean spirits fall before him, recognizing him as the Son of God. Jesus withdraws to a mountain to appoint the Twelve as his inner circle. The chapter closes with two linked controversies: scribes from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of operating by Beelzebul's power, and Jesus's own family comes to seize him, thinking he is out of his mind. Jesus redefines family as those who do God's will.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Beelzebul controversy contains some of Jesus's most tightly reasoned argumentation: the divided-kingdom analogy, the strong-man parable, and the warning about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The appointment of the Twelve echoes Israel's twelve tribes and signals the reconstitution of God's people. The tension between Jesus's biological family and his spiritual family is stark — Mark uniquely records that his family thought he was 'out of his mind' (3:21). The twelve are called both to 'be with him' (relationship) and to 'be sent out' (mission).*

Translation Friction: *The 'unforgivable sin' passage (vv. 28-30) has generated centuries of theological debate. We render the Greek faithfully and note the interpretive range without resolving it. The list of the Twelve varies slightly across the Synoptics; we follow the SBLGNT text of Mark. The identity of Jesus's 'brothers' (adelphoi) in verse 31 is disputed among Christian traditions — biological siblings, half-siblings, or cousins.*

Connections: *The appointment of twelve apostles on a mountain echoes Moses and the twelve tribes at Sinai. The Beelzebul accusation connects to the broader theme of cosmic conflict in Mark. The redefinition of family anticipates the new community that will form around Jesus. The 'strong man' parable illuminates Jesus's exorcism ministry as plundering Satan's household.*

¹He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ²They were watching him closely to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse him. ³He said to the man with the withered hand, "Stand up here in the middle." ⁴Then he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵He looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of their hearts, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against him, plotting how to destroy him. ⁷Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. Also from Judea, ⁸Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon — a large crowd, hearing about all that he was doing, came to him. ⁹He told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. ¹⁰For he had healed many, so that all who had diseases were pressing forward to touch him. ¹¹Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God!" ¹²He sternly ordered them not to make him known. ¹³He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴He appointed twelve — whom he also named apostles — so that they would be with him and so that he could send them out to preach ¹⁵to have authority to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: ¹⁶He appointed the Twelve: Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter; ¹⁷James the son of Zebedee and his brother John — he gave them the name Boanerges, which means "Sons of Thunder"; ¹⁸Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him — then they traveled into a home. ²⁰Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹When his family heard about it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." ²²The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He has Beelzebul," and "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." ²³He called them to himself and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴That kingdom cannot stand, and if a kingdom be divided against itself. ²⁵And if a household is divided against itself, that household will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand — his end has come. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. ²⁸"Truly I say to you, all sins

will be forgiven the children of humanity, and whatever blasphemies they utter. ²⁹But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin." ³⁰He said this because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." ³¹Then his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent word to him, calling for him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you." ³³He replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴Looking around at those seated in a circle around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God — that person is my brother and sister and mother."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The perfect participle *exērammenēn* ('having been withered, dried up') suggests a condition that was not congenital but developed over time — the hand had dried up and remained in that state. The scene is set for a confrontation: Jesus, the synagogue, a person in need, and watching opponents.
2. The imperfect *paretērōun* ('they were watching closely') implies sustained, hostile surveillance. The verb carries connotations of lying in wait. The purpose clause *hina katēgorēsōsin* ('so that they might accuse') reveals their intent from the outset — they are not seeking truth but building a case. Later rabbinic law permitted healing on the Sabbath only when life was in danger; a withered hand was not life-threatening.
3. Jesus deliberately makes the healing public by calling the man to the center (*eis to meson*). He does not heal secretly to avoid confrontation but forces the issue in full view of his opponents. The command *egeire* ('rise, stand up') is the same word used in resurrection contexts.
4. Jesus reframes the legal question in stark binary terms: not healing is not neutral — it is 'doing evil' and 'killing.' The Pharisees' silence (*esiōpōn*) is telling — they cannot answer without either condemning themselves or conceding Jesus's point. The verb *sōsai* ('to save') and *apokteinai* ('to kill') may be doubly ironic, since the Pharisees are about to plot to kill Jesus (v. 6) on the very Sabbath when they forbid saving a life.
5. Mark is the only evangelist who records Jesus's anger (*met' orgēs*) and grief (*sylypoumenos*) together in this scene. The combination reveals a complex emotional response: anger at the opponents' callousness, grief at their spiritual blindness. The word *pōrōsis* ('hardness, callousness') literally refers to the calcification of bone — their hearts have become petrified. The same word describes Pharaoh's hardened heart in the Septuagint. The healing requires no touch, no word of power — just a command to stretch, and the restoration is immediate.
6. The alliance between Pharisees and Herodians is deeply ironic — these were natural enemies. The Pharisees represented strict Jewish piety; the Herodians supported the Herodian dynasty and its accommodation with Rome. Their shared hostility toward Jesus unites them. The verb *apolesōsin* ('might destroy') makes the murderous intent explicit. The word *euthys* ('immediately') underscores the urgency of their response — the Sabbath healing has pushed them to decisive action.
7. The verb *anechōrēsen* ('withdrew') indicates a strategic retreat from the hostility described in verse 6. The geographic catalog that follows (vv. 7-8) shows that Jesus's fame has spread far beyond Galilee, drawing people from virtually every region of Jewish settlement.
8. The geographic scope is remarkable: Galilee (north), Judea and Jerusalem (south), Idumea (far south — Edomite territory), Transjordan (east), and Tyre and Sidon (Phoenician northwest, Gentile territory). This represents virtually the entire extent of the Jewish diaspora in the region, plus Gentile areas. Mark presents Jesus's appeal as transcending all geographic and ethnic boundaries.
9. The verb *thlibōsin* ('press upon, crush, squeeze') conveys genuine physical danger from the pressing crowd. The small boat (*plouarion*, diminutive form) would serve as both an escape route and a floating platform from which to teach (as in 4:1). This practical detail adds eyewitness vividness to the narrative.
10. The verb *epiptein* ('to fall upon, press against') describes an almost frantic surge. The noun *mastigas* (literally 'whips, scourges') is used metaphorically for diseases — afflictions experienced as divine scourging. The desire to touch (*haptōntai*) reflects the ancient belief that healing power could be transmitted through physical contact, a belief Mark affirms in the case of the woman with the hemorrhage (5:28-30).
11. The imperfect tenses (*etheōroun*, *proseipten*, *ekrazon*) indicate repeated, habitual action — this happened consistently, not just once. The demons' recognition of Jesus as 'the Son of God' (*ho huios tou theou*) contrasts sharply with the human characters' inability to grasp his identity. The prostration (*proseipten*, 'fell before') could express both involuntary submission to superior power and an attempt to gain control by naming Jesus.
12. The adverb *polla* ('much, repeatedly') with *epetima* ('rebuked, commanded') indicates that Jesus had to silence the demons repeatedly and emphatically. The messianic secret continues — Jesus controls the revelation of his identity. The phrase *phaneron poiēsōsin* ('make manifest, make known') implies public disclosure of his messianic identity.
13. The mountain setting (*to oros*, with the article — 'the mountain') evokes Sinai, where God constituted Israel as a people through Moses. Jesus now constitutes a new community. The verb *proskaleitai* ('summons, calls to himself') emphasizes Jesus's sovereign initiative — he chose them, not the reverse. The phrase *hous ēthelen autos* ('whom he himself wanted') stresses the personal, deliberate nature of the selection.
14. The verb *epoiēsen* ('made, appointed, created') is striking — the same verb used for God's creative acts. Jesus 'makes' the Twelve as a new creation. The number twelve corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel, signaling the reconstitution of God's people. The dual purpose is significant: first, 'to be with him' (relationship and formation), and second, 'to be sent out' (mission). Some manuscripts omit 'whom he also named apostles,' but the SBLGNT includes it.

15. The SBLGNT does not include 'to heal sicknesses' (therapeuin tas nosous), which appears in some later manuscripts. The authority (exousia) given to the Twelve is a delegated form of Jesus's own authority demonstrated in chapters 1-2. The focus on exorcism aligns with Mark's emphasis on Jesus's ministry as cosmic conflict with demonic powers.
16. The repetition of 'he appointed the Twelve' (epoiēsen tous dōdeka) may indicate that verses 14-15 state the general purpose while verses 16-19 list the specific members. The name Petros is the Greek translation of the Aramaic Kepha ('rock, stone'). The renaming signifies a new identity and mission, echoing the Old Testament pattern of God renaming Abram to Abraham and Jacob to Israel.
17. The Aramaic nickname Boanerges is difficult to reconstruct — the Greek transliteration does not correspond neatly to known Aramaic forms. It may derive from bene regesh ('sons of tumult/thunder'). Mark provides the translation for his Greek-speaking audience. The nickname may reflect the brothers' temperament (cf. Luke 9:54, where they want to call fire from heaven) or their powerful speaking style.
18. The name Kananaion is not 'Canaanite' (an ethnicity) but a transliteration of the Aramaic qan'ana ('zealot, enthusiast'), which Luke renders with the Greek Zēlōtēs. This may indicate membership in the Zealot movement or simply a zealous temperament. Thaddaeus appears here and in Matthew's list, while Luke has 'Judas son of James' in the same position — these may be the same person with different names, or the lists may reflect some variation in the group's composition.
19. Judas is listed last, and the note about his betrayal (paredōken, 'handed over') is attached immediately, ensuring the reader knows from the start what role he will play. The name Iskariōth may mean 'man of Kerioth' (a Judean town), which would make Judas the only non-Galilean among the Twelve. The verb paradidōmi ('hand over, betray, deliver up') is the same verb used for John's arrest in 1:14 and for Jesus's passion predictions.
20. The phrase eis oikon ('into a house' or 'home') likely refers again to the house in Capernaum. The detail that they cannot even eat (mēde arton phagein, literally 'not even bread to eat') underscores the overwhelming demand on Jesus — the ministry has become so consuming that basic needs go unmet.
21. The phrase hoi par' autou ('those from beside him') most likely refers to Jesus's family, as confirmed by verse 31 where his mother and brothers arrive. The verb kratēsai ('to seize, take hold of forcibly') is strong — the same verb used for arresting someone. The word exestē ('he has lost his mind, is beside himself') is a frank assessment that Jesus's behavior appeared mentally unstable. This remarkably candid detail is unique to Mark and would not have been invented by the early church.
22. These are not local scribes but representatives from Jerusalem — an official delegation sent to investigate and pronounce judgment. The accusation has two parts: Jesus is himself possessed ('He has Beelzebul'), and his exorcisms operate through demonic power. The name Beelzebul likely derives from the Philistine deity Ba'al Zebub ('Lord of the Flies,' 2 Kings 1:2), modified to Beelzebul ('Lord of the Dwelling/Dung'). The charge is devastating: Jesus's power is real, but its source is satanic.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 2 Kings 1:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. The phrase en parabolais ('in parables') here refers to figurative speech and analogies rather than the extended narrative parables of chapter 4. Jesus addresses the scribes' charge with logical argumentation. The question itself exposes the absurdity of the accusation — if Satan were working against his own forces, his realm would collapse.
24. The conditional clause presents a self-evident political principle that any listener could verify from history. The verb meristhē ('is divided') implies internal faction and civil war. Jesus is arguing from common experience to expose the logical impossibility of the scribes' accusation.
25. The word oikia can mean both a physical 'house' and a 'household' (the extended family and its affairs). The second analogy moves from the political sphere to the domestic, making the point more personal and immediate. The same principle applies at every level of social organization.
26. Jesus applies the principle to the specific case: if Satan is fighting against his own agents (the demons Jesus expels), then Satan's kingdom is in self-destructive civil war. The phrase telos echei ('has an end') means 'is finished, is done for.' Jesus's argument is: either the accusation is false (Satan is not behind the exorcisms) or Satan's kingdom is collapsing — either way, the scribes' position fails.
27. Jesus now offers his own explanation of the exorcisms through the 'strong man' parable. Satan is the 'strong man' (ischyros); his 'house' is the domain of demonic oppression; his 'possessions' (skeuē) are the people held captive. Jesus is the one who has 'bound' (dēsē) the strong man — likely a reference to the wilderness testing (1:12-13) — and is now systematically plundering Satan's realm through exorcisms. The verb diarpasai ('plunder, thoroughly rob') implies a complete ransacking.
28. The introductory amēn legō hymin ('truly I say to you') is a solemn formula of authority unique to Jesus in the Gospels — no rabbi preceded his own statements with 'amen.' The sweeping scope of forgiveness — 'all sins' (panta ta hamartēmata) and 'all blasphemies' (hai blasphēmiai) — makes the exception in the next verse all the more striking. The phrase tois huiōis tōn anthrōpōn ('to the sons of men') is a Semitic expression for human beings in general.
29. The SBLGNT reads 'eternal sin' (aiōniou hamartēmatos) rather than 'eternal condemnation/judgment' found in some manuscripts. The phrase ouk echei aphenis eis ton aiōna ('has no forgiveness into the age') is an emphatic negation. The context (v. 30) defines this blasphemy specifically as attributing the Holy Spirit's work to Satan — calling divine good demonic evil. This is not a momentary sin of speech but a settled, deliberate posture of calling light darkness. Many interpreters note that the very anxiety about having committed this sin is itself evidence that one has not, since it presupposes sensitivity to the Spirit.

30. Mark provides the explicit reason for Jesus's warning: the scribes had attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to an unclean spirit. The imperfect elegeon ('they were saying') suggests this was not a one-time remark but a sustained accusation. The blasphemy against the Spirit consists precisely in this inversion — seeing the Spirit's liberating work and calling it demonic.
31. This resumes the narrative begun in verse 21 — the family that set out to 'seize' Jesus has now arrived. The word adelphoi ('brothers') most naturally means biological siblings in Greek, though Catholic tradition interprets it as 'cousins' or 'step-brothers.' They stand 'outside' (exō), which becomes symbolically significant: they are on the outside while those sitting around Jesus are on the inside (v. 34).
32. The spatial arrangement is significant: the crowd sits 'around' (peri) Jesus in a circle, while the family stands 'outside' (exō). The verb zētousin ('are seeking, looking for') recalls the earlier note that the family came to seize him (v. 21). The crowd serves as messengers, informing Jesus of his family's presence.
33. The question is not a denial of his biological family but a redefinition of family itself. In a culture where kinship was the primary social bond and honoring parents was a foundational commandment, this question would have been shocking. Jesus does not go outside to his family; instead, he uses their arrival as a teaching moment.
34. The verb periblepsámenos ('looking around') is characteristically Markan — Jesus surveys the circle of listeners with a deliberate gaze. The demonstrative 'Here are' (ide, 'look, see') draws attention to those physically present. The insiders (those seated around Jesus, doing God's will) are his true family; the outsiders (his biological family, who think he is mad) are not.
35. The criterion for belonging to Jesus's family is singular: doing the will of God (to thelēma tou theou). The list — 'brother and sister and mother' — is inclusive of both genders but notably omits 'father,' perhaps because God alone holds that role in Jesus's reconstituted family. This saying creates a new kinship structure based on obedience to God rather than biological descent, a radical redefinition with profound implications for the early church's self-understanding as a family of faith.

4

Summary: Mark 4 presents Jesus's major teaching discourse: a collection of parables about the kingdom of God delivered from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Parable of the Sower dominates the chapter, followed by Jesus's explanation of why he teaches in parables, the private interpretation for the disciples, and additional parables about a lamp, the measure, the seed growing secretly, and the mustard seed. The chapter concludes dramatically with Jesus calming a storm on the sea, revealing his authority over nature itself.

What Makes This Remarkable: Mark's parable discourse is shorter than Matthew's (chapter 13) but more focused on the mystery of the kingdom. The 'hardening' passage (vv. 11-12) is one of the most debated texts in the Gospels — does Jesus teach in parables to reveal or to conceal? Mark's answer appears to be both. The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (vv. 26-29) is unique to Mark. The storm-calming miracle transitions from the theme of hidden power in the parables to a dramatic display of cosmic authority, with the disciples' question 'Who then is this?' becoming the central question of the entire Gospel.

Translation Friction: The purpose of parables in verses 11-12 (quoting Isaiah 6:9-10) is theologically challenging. The Greek hina ('so that') appears to indicate purpose rather than result — Jesus teaches in parables so that outsiders will not understand. We render the Greek faithfully and note the interpretive options. The Parable of the Sower is technically a parable about soils/responses, but we retain the traditional title.

Connections: The sower parable draws on agricultural imagery common in prophetic literature (Isaiah 55:10-11; Hosea 10:12). The storm-calming echoes Psalm 107:23-32 and Jonah 1, where God alone controls the sea. The mustard seed parable may allude to Ezekiel 17:22-24 and Daniel 4:10-12, where great trees shelter the nations. The 'mystery of the kingdom' language connects to Daniel's apocalyptic framework.

¹Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was on the shore facing the sea. ²He was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up immediately because the soil had no depth. ⁶When the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing, yielding thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." ⁹Then he said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them

hear." ¹⁰When he was alone, those around him along with the Twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹He said to them, "To you the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given, but to those outside, everything comes in parables, ¹²That looking they may see, and not grasp the meaning. And hearing they may hear, and not understand. Lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. ¹³Then he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵These are the ones along the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷But they have no root in themselves and last only a short time. Then when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away. ¹⁸Others are the ones sown among thorns. These are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹Worldly concerns, and the deception of wealth, and cravings for other things creeping in, choke out the message, and it becometh unfruitful. ²⁰But those are the ones sown on good soil: they hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit — thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." ²¹He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be placed on a lampstand? ²²For there is nothing hidden except to be revealed, nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear." ²⁴He said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you — and more will be added to you. ²⁵For whoever has, more will be given to them. But whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." ²⁶He also said, "The kingdom of God is like this: a man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷He sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows — he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces fruit by itself — first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, he immediately sends in the sickle, because the harvest has come." ³⁰He also said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or with what parable shall we present it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which when sown on the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. ³²Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes the largest of all garden plants, and produces such large branches that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade." ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as much as they were able to hear. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything. ³⁵On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." ³⁶Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along just as he was in the boat, and other boats were with him. ³⁷A fierce windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹They were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The boat from 3:9 now serves its purpose as a teaching platform. The superlative *pleistos* ('very large, greatest') indicates an extraordinary crowd. The spatial arrangement — Jesus on the water, crowd on the land — creates a natural amphitheater. The detail that Jesus 'sat down' (*kathēsthai*) reflects the standard Jewish teaching posture; a rabbi sat to teach and stood to read Scripture.
2. The Greek *parabolē* covers a range of figurative speech — from simple comparisons to extended narrative allegories. Mark notes that Jesus taught 'many things' (*polla*) in parables, though only a selection is recorded. The phrase *en tē didachē autou* ('in his teaching') frames what follows as representative of Jesus's broader teaching ministry.
3. The imperative *akouete* ('listen!') demands attention and becomes thematically central — hearing and understanding are the parable's main concern. The verb *speirai* ('to sow') describes broadcast sowing, where seed is scattered by hand across a field before plowing. In Palestinian agriculture, sowing preceded plowing, which explains why seed falls on various types of ground.
4. The 'path' (*hodos*) refers to a footpath running through or alongside the field, where the ground was packed hard by foot traffic. Seed landing there could not penetrate the surface and was easily picked off by birds. The verb *katēphagen* ('devoured, ate up completely') indicates total loss.
5. The 'rocky ground' (*petrōdes*) refers to a thin layer of soil over a limestone shelf, common in Galilee. The word *euthys* ('immediately') here describes the rapid germination caused by the rock underneath retaining heat — ironically, the fastest growth comes from the worst soil. The lack of depth (*bathos*) prevents root development.
6. The sun that normally nurtures growth becomes destructive when roots are absent. The verb *ekaumatisthē* ('was scorched, burned') and *exēranthē* ('withered, dried up') describe a rapid decline. The sequence — quick growth, scorching, withering — creates a vivid agricultural picture that any

Galilean farmer would recognize.

7. The thorns (akanthai) were dormant root systems already present in the soil — invisible at planting time but growing faster and more aggressively than the grain. The verb synepnixan ('choked, strangled together') is vivid — the thorns literally suffocate the crop by competing for light, water, and nutrients. The result: karpon ouk edōken ('it gave no fruit') — total fruitlessness despite genuine growth.
8. The good soil's harvest is described with three participles — 'growing up' (anabainonta), 'increasing' (auxanomena), and 'yielding' (epheren) — creating a sense of abundant, overflowing productivity. Normal yields in ancient Palestine were roughly seven to tenfold; thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold represent extraordinary, almost miraculous abundance. The escalating numbers build toward a climax of superabundant fruitfulness that more than compensates for the three types of loss.
9. This formulaic saying (repeated in 4:23 and elsewhere) signals that the parable requires deeper reflection. Physical hearing is not enough — true 'hearing' involves understanding and response. The phrase echoes Deuteronomy's call to 'hear, O Israel' (Shema Yisrael), where hearing means obedient response.
10. The phrase kata monas ('in private, alone') indicates a shift from public teaching to private instruction. Those asking include not just the Twelve but a wider circle of followers (hoi peri auton, 'those around him'). The plural tas parabolais ('the parables') suggests they asked about the meaning of parables in general, not just the Sower.
11. The word mystērion ('mystery, secret') in biblical Greek does not mean something unknowable but something that was hidden and is now being revealed to those chosen to receive it. The concept draws on Daniel's apocalyptic language (Daniel 2:28-29), where God reveals mysteries about his kingdom. The contrast between 'you' (insiders) and 'those outside' (ekeinois tois exō) creates two categories of hearers. The passive dedotai ('has been given') is a divine passive — God is the giver of understanding.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 2:28-29. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. This quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, the prophet's commission where God tells Isaiah that his preaching will harden, not soften, the people. The conjunction hina ('so that') appears to express purpose — the parables are given so that outsiders will not understand. This is theologically difficult and has been interpreted variously: (1) the hina expresses divine purpose in hardening, (2) it should be understood as result rather than purpose ('with the result that'), (3) it reflects an Aramaic conjunction that could mean 'who' rather than 'so that.' Mark's Greek as written presents the strongest version: the parables simultaneously reveal to insiders and conceal from outsiders.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 6:9-10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. Jesus expresses surprise — even mild exasperation — at the disciples' lack of understanding. The implication is that the Sower parable is foundational; it is the key that unlocks all the other parables. If they cannot grasp this one, they will struggle with the rest. This is the first hint of the disciples' persistent incomprehension, a major Markan theme.
14. The identification is simple but profound: the seed is 'the word' (ton logon) — the message of the kingdom that Jesus proclaims (cf. 1:14-15, 2:2). The parable is thus self-referential: it describes the reception of the very teaching that includes this parable.
15. The birds of verse 4 are identified as Satan. The word euthys ('immediately') here describes Satan's swift action in removing the word before it can take root. Mark's interpretation identifies the four soils as four types of human response to the proclaimed word. The first type represents a total failure of reception — the word never penetrates at all.
16. The second type receives the word with enthusiasm — meta charas ('with joy'). The immediate, joyful reception looks promising but proves shallow. Mark's euthys ('immediately') parallels the rapid germination of the seed on rocky soil — quick growth that lacks depth.
17. The word proskairoi ('temporary, lasting for a time') describes people whose commitment is seasonal. The terms thlipsis ('trouble, affliction, pressure') and diōgmos ('persecution') reflect the experience of the early church, suggesting Mark's audience would recognize themselves in this warning. The verb skandalizontai ('are caused to stumble, fall away') derives from skandalon, the trigger of a trap — they are ensnared and brought down.
18. The third soil type hears the word genuinely — the problem is not with reception but with competing commitments. The thorns represent internal rather than external obstacles, making this category perhaps the most insidious because the word does take root and grow but is gradually suffocated.
19. Three thorns are named: merimna tou aiōnos ('anxieties of the age' — daily worries), apatē tou ploutou ('the deception of wealth' — the false promise that material prosperity brings security), and epithumiai peri ta loipa ('desires for everything else' — a catch-all for competing attachments). The verb sympnigousin ('choke together') echoes the agricultural imagery. The result is akarpōs ('fruitless') — the word is present but produces nothing.
20. The good soil hearers do three things: akouousin ('hear'), paradechontai ('accept, welcome, embrace'), and karpophorousin ('bear fruit'). The verb paradechomai implies a hospitable reception — welcoming the word as one would welcome a guest. The varying yields (thirty, sixty, hundred) suggest that even among faithful hearers, there are differences in fruitfulness without any being inadequate.
21. The Greek modios is a dry measure container (roughly a peck or 8.75 liters), used here as a basket that could cover a lamp. The saying works against any interpretation of verses 11-12 that suggests permanent concealment — what is hidden now will eventually be revealed. The parable's logic: hiding

is temporary; revelation is the purpose.

22. The double negative construction emphasizes the absolute certainty of future revelation. The Greek *krypton* ('hidden') and *apokryphon* ('concealed, secret') are near synonyms used for emphasis. This saying qualifies the hardening passage of verses 11-12: the mystery is given to insiders now, but God's purpose is ultimate revelation, not permanent concealment.
23. This repetition of the hearing formula from verse 9 brackets the explanation section and emphasizes the parable's demand for responsive hearing. The conditional 'if anyone' (*ei tis*) makes the invitation universal while acknowledging that not all will respond.
24. The imperative *blepete* ('pay attention, watch out') shifts the responsibility to the hearer. The measure saying (*en hō metrō metreite metrēthēsetai hymin*) uses the figure of a measuring container: the more attention and obedience you invest in hearing, the more understanding you will receive in return. The addition (*prostēthēsetai*, 'will be added') suggests compounding returns — faithful hearing produces exponentially more understanding.
25. This paradoxical saying describes a spiritual principle: receptive hearing generates more capacity for understanding, while failure to receive causes even existing understanding to atrophy. The saying sounds harsh but describes an observable dynamic — engagement deepens capacity, while neglect erodes it. In context, it applies to the reception of Jesus's teaching.
26. This parable of the seed growing secretly is unique to Mark — neither Matthew nor Luke includes it. The introductory formula *houtōs estin hē basileia tou theou* ('thus is the kingdom of God') directly identifies the parable as describing how God's kingdom operates. The emphasis falls on the mysterious, autonomous growth of the seed apart from human effort.
27. The repetitive rhythm of 'sleeps and rises, night and day' conveys the ordinary passage of time. The farmer's ignorance (*ouk oiden autos*, 'he himself does not know') is the parable's key point: the growth happens independently of the farmer's knowledge, effort, or understanding. The kingdom of God has its own power and timetable that operates beyond human control.
28. The key word is *automatē* ('by itself, of its own accord') — from which we derive 'automatic.' The earth's productivity is inherent, not dependent on the farmer's intervention. The three stages — *chorton* (green shoot/stalk), *stachyn* (grain head), *plērēs siton en tō stachyi* ('full grain in the head') — describe the natural progression from germination to harvest. The parable assures: the kingdom will reach its fullness through God's own power, regardless of human inability to accelerate or control the process.
29. The verb *paradoi* ('yields, delivers itself up') uses the same root as *paradidōmi* ('hand over, betray') — the grain 'hands itself over' to be harvested. The harvest imagery echoes Joel 3:13 ('Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe'), which is a judgment image. The word *euthys* ('immediately') here suggests that when God's appointed time arrives, the harvest comes swiftly. The farmer's only role at harvest is to recognize the moment and act.
29. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 3:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
30. The deliberative subjunctives (*homoiōsōmen*, 'shall we liken'; *thōmen*, 'shall we set forth') use the first person plural, inviting the audience into the process of reflection. The double question creates anticipation. The verb *homoioō* means 'to make like, compare, represent' — Jesus is searching for adequate analogies for an unprecedented reality.
31. The mustard seed (*kokkos sinapeōs*) was proverbially the smallest seed known in Palestinian agriculture. The claim 'smallest of all seeds on earth' is not a botanical absolute but a proverbial expression — 'small as a mustard seed' was a common Jewish idiom for something tiny. The contrast between the seed's smallness and the plant's size is the parable's point.
32. The mustard plant (*Brassica nigra*) can grow to 8-12 feet in a single season — large enough for birds to perch in its branches. The birds 'nesting in its shade' (*kataskēnōn*) echoes Ezekiel 17:23 and Daniel 4:12, 21, where a great tree sheltering birds represents a powerful kingdom that provides for the nations. The kingdom of God begins as the smallest, most unimpressive seed but grows into something that shelters all who come to it.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 17:23. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 4:12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. The phrase *kathōs ēdynantō akouein* ('as they were able to hear') suggests Jesus calibrated his teaching to his audience's capacity. This qualification softens the hardening language of verses 11-12 — Jesus did not overwhelm people but met them where they were. The word *logos* ('the word') again refers to the kingdom message.
34. The contrast between public parabolic teaching and private explanation reinforces the insider/outsider distinction of verse 11. The verb *epelyen* ('explained, solved, interpreted') literally means 'to loose, untie' — Jesus 'unties' the parables for the disciples, unwinding their meaning. The word *panta* ('everything, all things') indicates thorough instruction.
35. The temporal note 'on that day' (*en ekeinē tē hēmera*) connects the storm miracle to the teaching day. The command 'let us cross to the other side' (*dielhōmen eis to peran*) initiates a journey to the eastern (Gentile) shore of the Sea of Galilee. The 'other side' will increasingly become the space where Jesus encounters Gentiles and the margins of Jewish society.
36. The phrase *hōs ēn en tō ploioiō* ('just as he was in the boat') suggests they departed without preparation — Jesus was still in the teaching boat and simply set off. The mention of 'other boats' (*alla ploia*) is a detail unique to Mark that disappears from the narrative once the storm hits, adding to the sense of eyewitness recollection of incidental detail.

37. The word *lailaps* designates a sudden, violent squall — the Sea of Galilee, situated 700 feet below sea level and surrounded by hills, is notorious for sudden storms as cool Mediterranean air rushes down the surrounding valleys and collides with the warm air above the lake. The imperfect *epeballen* ('kept breaking over') describes wave after wave crashing into the boat. The passive *gemizesthai* ('being filled, being swamped') indicates the boat was taking on water to a dangerous degree.
38. The detail of Jesus sleeping on the *prospephalaion* ('cushion, headrest') in the stern (*prymna*) is remarkably specific — likely a rower's seat cushion or a sandbag used for ballast. Jesus's sleep during a life-threatening storm demonstrates either supreme faith or utter exhaustion (or both). The disciples' question — *ou melei soi* ('does it not matter to you?') — is a rebuke more than a request. Their verb *apollymetha* ('we are being destroyed, we are perishing') conveys genuine terror.
39. Jesus addresses the wind and sea with the same authority he uses against demons — *epetimēsen* ('rebuked') is the exorcism verb from 1:25. The command *pephimōso* ('be muzzled') is the same word used to silence the demon in 1:25. Mark may be implying that the storm has a demonic dimension, or simply that Jesus's authority extends over all forces, natural and supernatural. The instant result — 'a great calm' (*galēnē megalē*) — contrasts with the 'great windstorm' (*lailaps megalē*) of verse 37.
40. The word *deiloī* ('cowardly, fearful, timid') is stronger than ordinary fear — it implies a failure of nerve, a lack of trust. The question *oupō echete pistin* ('do you not yet have faith?') implies that by now, after all they have seen, they should have developed faith. The 'not yet' (*oupō*) suggests faith is a process that the disciples have barely begun.
41. The phrase *ephothēsan phobon megan* ('they feared a great fear') uses a cognate accusative for emphasis — the fear after the miracle is greater than the fear during the storm. They are more terrified of Jesus than of the storm. The question *tis ara houtos estin* ('who then is this?') is the central question of Mark's Gospel. The Old Testament answer is clear: it is God who controls the sea (Psalm 89:9, 'You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them'; Psalm 107:29, 'He made the storm be still'). The disciples' question thus points toward a divine identity they cannot yet articulate.
41. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 89:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
41. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 107:29. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

5

Summary: *Mark 5 presents three powerful miracle stories that demonstrate Jesus's authority over the most extreme forms of human suffering. First, Jesus crosses to the eastern (Gentile) shore and encounters a man possessed by a legion of demons living among the tombs, whom he delivers in a dramatic exorcism involving a herd of pigs. Returning to the western shore, Jesus is approached by Jairus, a synagogue leader whose daughter is dying. On the way, a woman who has suffered from bleeding for twelve years touches Jesus's garment and is healed. Jesus then raises Jairus's daughter from death. The three stories form a crescendo: power over demons, power over chronic illness, and power over death itself.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Mark's intercalation technique is on full display — the story of Jairus's daughter is 'sandwiched' around the hemorrhaging woman's story, each enriching the other. Both feature the number twelve (the woman's twelve years of illness, the girl's age of twelve). Both involve ritual impurity — bleeding and death. Both require faith. The Gerasene demoniac is Mark's most detailed miracle account, with vivid narrative elements that suggest eyewitness memory. The healed demoniac becomes the first commissioned evangelist in Mark — and a Gentile one at that.*

Translation Friction: *The location of the Gerasene miracle is textually uncertain — manuscripts read 'Gerasenes,' 'Gadarenes,' or 'Gergesenes.' Gerasa is 30 miles from the lake, Gadara is 6 miles away, and Gergesa (modern Kursi) is on the shore. We follow the SBLGNT reading 'Gerasenes.' The drowning of the pigs raises ethical questions we do not resolve — we render the text faithfully. The Greek *talitha koum* in verse 41 is Aramaic preserved in the Greek text.*

Connections: *The Gerasene setting evokes the unclean lands of the nations. The legion of demons uses Roman military terminology — Mark's audience in Rome would not miss the irony. The hemorrhaging woman's healing connects to Levitical purity laws (Leviticus 15:25-30). Jairus's daughter anticipates Jesus's own resurrection. The command to silence in verse 43 contrasts with the command to proclaim in verse 19.*

¹They came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. ²As soon as he got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. ³He lived among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, not even with a chain. ⁴For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he tore the chains apart and smashed the shackles, and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷Crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me!" ⁸For Jesus had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." ¹⁰He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the region. ¹¹Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. ¹²The demons begged him, "Send us into the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³He gave them permission. The unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd — about two thousand — stampeded down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. ¹⁴Those tending the pigs fled and reported it in the town and in the countryside, and people came to see what had happened. ¹⁵They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed — the one who had had the legion — sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and about the pigs. ¹⁷Then they began to beg him to leave their region. ¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹But Jesus did not permit him. Instead he said to him, "Go home to your own people and report to them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰He went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone was amazed. ²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he was beside the sea. ²²One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³Besought him greatly and stated, My little daughter lieth at the point of death — I pray you, come and lay your hands on her, that she may be healed. Then she will live. ²⁴So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵A woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years, ²⁶Had suffered numerous things of numerous physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,. ²⁷When she had listened to of Jesus, arrived in the press behind, and touched his garment. ²⁸For she was saying, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be saved." ²⁹Immediately the flow of her blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. ³⁰Immediately Jesus, aware that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹His disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing against you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²But he kept looking around to see who had done this. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." ³⁵While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader's house saying, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any further?" ³⁶But Jesus, overhearing what was said, told the synagogue leader, "Do not be afraid; just believe." ³⁷He did not allow anyone to go with him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. ³⁸They came to the house of the synagogue leader, and he saw a commotion — people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹Going in, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰They laughed at him. But he put them all outside, took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in to where the child was. ⁴¹Taking the child by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum" — which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up." ⁴²Immediately the girl stood up and began walking, for she was twelve years old. They were immediately overcome with great amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT reads Gerasēnōn ('Gerasenes') rather than the KJV's 'Gadarenes.' The 'other side' (to peran) is the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee — predominantly Gentile territory, as the presence of a pig herd will confirm. Jesus is crossing from Jewish to Gentile space, a significant boundary in Mark's narrative geography.

2. The word euthys ('immediately') marks the instant confrontation — Jesus barely steps ashore before encountering the demoniac. The man comes 'from the tombs' (ek tōn mnēmeiōn), his dwelling place among the dead. Every detail accumulates uncleanness: Gentile territory, tombs, an unclean spirit. Jesus enters the most impure space imaginable.
3. The triple negative (oude... ouketi... oudeis, 'not even... no longer... no one') emphasizes the absolute impossibility of human control over this man. The verb dēsai ('bind, tie up') echoes the 'binding the strong man' language of 3:27 — no one can bind this man because the strong man (Satan) controls him. Only the one who has already bound the strong man can free his captive.
4. The distinction between pedais ('shackles' for the feet) and halysesin ('chains' for the hands/body) indicates repeated, thorough attempts at physical restraint. The verbs diespatsthai ('tore apart') and syntetripsthai ('crushed, smashed to pieces') convey superhuman strength. The verb damasai ('tame, subdue') is used for taming wild animals — the community has tried to treat this man as a beast. The perfect tenses indicate a history of failed attempts.
5. The description is harrowing: constant screaming (krazōn) and self-mutilation (katakoptōn heauton lithois, 'cutting himself down with stones'). The phrase dia pantos ('continually, always') with nyktos kai hēmeras ('night and day') portrays unceasing torment. The man oscillates between tombs (death) and mountains (isolation), with no rest and no human community. Mark paints the most extreme portrait of demonic oppression in the Gospels.
6. The verb prosekunēsēn ('fell down before, prostrated himself, worshipped') can mean either worship or obeisance. Given the demonic context, this is likely involuntary submission to Jesus's authority rather than genuine worship. The man runs toward Jesus — not away. Despite the demons' hostility, something in the man is drawn to Jesus as his only hope.
7. The demon uses the same defensive formula as in 1:24 — ti emoi kai soi ('what to me and to you?'). The title 'Son of the Most High God' (huios tou theou tou hypsistou) uses the Gentile designation for Israel's God (cf. Genesis 14:18-22), appropriate for the Gentile setting. The irony is profound: the demon adjures Jesus by God (horkizō se ton theon) — attempting to use divine authority against the divine Son. The verb basanisēs ('torment') refers to eschatological punishment — the demon fears Jesus has come to execute final judgment ahead of schedule.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 14:18-22. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The imperfect elegen ('he was saying, had been saying') indicates that Jesus had already begun commanding the spirit before the exchange in verse 7. The demon's plea in verse 7 is a response to Jesus's initial exorcism command. Mark presents the encounter as a struggle, albeit one whose outcome is never in doubt.
9. In ancient practice, knowing a spirit's name gave power over it. Jesus's question asserts authority. The answer legiōn is a Latin loanword — a Roman legion numbered approximately 5,000-6,000 soldiers. The name evokes both the overwhelming number of demons and, for Mark's Roman audience, the occupying military force. The shift between singular ('my name') and plural ('we are many') reflects the blurred identity of the possessed man and the possessing spirits.
10. The imperfect parekalei ('kept begging') indicates persistent pleading. The demons' request not to be sent 'out of the region' (exō tēs chōras) is puzzling — perhaps they fear being sent to the abyss (cf. Luke 8:31) or prefer to remain in familiar territory. Their desperation and subservience to Jesus's authority is clear: they negotiate from a position of total weakness.
11. The presence of pigs confirms the Gentile setting — pigs were unclean animals under Jewish law (Leviticus 11:7) and would not be raised in Jewish territory. The word agelē ('herd') is typically used for cattle; its use for pigs may reflect the unusually large number. The hillside (pros tō orei) near the sea sets up the dramatic plunge of verse 13.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 11:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The demons' request to enter the pigs rather than be cast into the abyss reveals their desperate desire to remain embodied and in the earthly realm. Their need to ask Jesus's permission demonstrates his absolute authority — they cannot act without his consent.
13. The number 'about two thousand' (hōs dischilioi) reinforces the name 'Legion' and the scale of the oppression. The verb hōrmēsēn ('rushed, stampeded') describes a headlong, uncontrollable charge. The verb epnigonto ('were drowning, suffocating') is imperfect, depicting the ongoing process. The sea, which in Jewish cosmology was associated with chaos and evil, swallows the unclean spirits along with the unclean animals — a symbolic victory over the forces of chaos.
14. The herdsmen's flight (ephygon, 'fled') reflects terror at the supernatural event. Their report spreads to both urban (polis) and rural (agrous) areas. The phrase ti estin to gegonos ('what is the thing that has happened') uses the perfect participle — the accomplished event with ongoing implications.
15. The transformation is described in three participles: kathēmenon ('sitting' — formerly restless), himatismēnon ('clothed' — formerly naked, implied), and sōphronounta ('in his right mind' — formerly raving). The fear (ephobēthēsan) is not gratitude but dread — the power that could do this is as terrifying as the demoniac himself had been. The townspeople fear Jesus's power more than they appreciate the man's healing.
16. The eyewitnesses (hoi idontes, 'those who saw') provide a detailed account (diēgēsanto, 'narrated, described'). The dual focus — what happened to the man and what happened to the pigs — reflects the community's twin concerns: the miraculous healing and the economic loss.

17. The verb *parakalein* ('to beg, urge, implore') is the same word the demons used in verse 10. The community asks Jesus to leave — they prefer the familiar misery of a demoniac to the disruptive power of the healer. The economic loss of two thousand pigs may also motivate their request. This is one of the rare occasions where Jesus is rejected by an entire community.
18. The verb *parakalei* ('was begging') appears for the third time in this passage — the demons begged (v. 10, 12), the townspeople begged (v. 17), and now the healed man begs. His request 'to be with him' (*hina met' autou ē*) echoes the purpose of the Twelve's appointment in 3:14 — he wants to become a disciple. In contrast to the community's rejection, the healed man is drawn to Jesus.
19. This is the only case in Mark where Jesus commands someone to proclaim rather than to keep silent. The messianic secret does not apply in Gentile territory, where there is no risk of politicized messianic misunderstanding. The phrase *ho kyrios* ('the Lord') could refer to God or to Jesus — the ambiguity may be intentional. The verb *ēlēēsen* ('had mercy') attributes the healing to divine compassion.
20. The man exceeds his commission — Jesus said to tell 'your own people' what 'the Lord' had done; the man proclaims throughout the entire Decapolis (a league of ten Greco-Roman cities) what 'Jesus' had done. He identifies Jesus as the Lord. The Decapolis was predominantly Gentile territory, making this man effectively the first Gentile missionary in Mark. The imperfect *ethaumazon* ('were amazed, kept marveling') indicates an ongoing response.
21. Jesus returns to the western (Jewish) shore. The recurring setting — 'beside the sea' (*para tēn thalassan*) — connects this to previous lakeside scenes. The crowd's immediate gathering indicates Jesus's continued popularity despite official opposition.
22. The title *archisunagōgos* ('synagogue ruler/leader') denotes the person responsible for managing synagogue services and facilities — a position of considerable local prestige. That such a figure would prostrate himself publicly before an itinerant teacher indicates extreme desperation. The name *Iairos* is the Greek form of Hebrew *Ya'ir* ('he will enlighten/awaken'), which becomes poignant given the story's outcome.
23. The diminutive *thygatrion* ('little daughter') conveys parental tenderness. The phrase *eschatōs echei* ('is at the last, at extremity') indicates she is near death. The verb *sōthē* ('may be saved') carries both physical healing and theological salvation in its range — Mark often uses *sōzō* with this double sense. Jairus's faith is expressed in his confidence that Jesus's touch will heal.
24. The verb *synethlibon* ('were pressing together against, crushing') recalls 3:9 where Jesus needed a boat to escape the crowd. The crushing crowd creates the condition for the next episode — the hemorrhaging woman can approach Jesus unnoticed because of the dense press of bodies.
25. The phrase *rhysis haimatos* ('flow of blood') likely refers to chronic vaginal bleeding, which under Levitical law (Leviticus 15:25-30) rendered the woman perpetually ritually unclean and made anyone or anything she touched unclean as well. For twelve years she has been excluded from the temple, synagogue worship, and normal social contact. The twelve years will be paralleled by the twelve years of Jairus's daughter's life.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 15:25-30 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. Mark's description is blunt about the medical profession: the woman suffered (*pathousa*, 'having endured much') under (*hypo* — from) the doctors, spent all her money (*dapanēsasa ta par' autēs panta*, 'having spent all that she had'), received no benefit (*mēden ōphelētheisa*), and actually deteriorated (*eis to cheiron elthousa*, 'having gone to the worse'). This frank assessment of ancient medicine is unique to Mark — Luke, the physician-evangelist, softens it considerably.
27. Her approach from behind (*opisthen*) suggests both hope and fear — hope that Jesus can help, fear of public exposure of her condition. By touching his garment, she would technically transmit her ritual impurity to him. Her action is bold but covert, reflecting a woman who has been marginalized for twelve years and is reluctant to draw attention to herself.
28. The imperfect *elegen* ('she was saying, kept saying to herself') suggests ongoing internal deliberation as she worked up courage. The verb *sōthēsomai* ('I will be saved/healed') again carries the dual sense of physical healing and spiritual wholeness. Her faith, though expressed through what might seem a superstitious mechanism (touching clothing), is directed toward Jesus personally.
29. The healing is instantaneous (*euthys*) and physically perceptible. The word *pēgē* ('spring, fountain, source') for the bleeding is a medical term. The verb *egnō tō sōmati* ('she knew in her body') describes a somatic awareness — she could physically feel the change. The word *mastigos* ('affliction, scourge') is the same word used in 3:10 for diseases, viewing illness as a kind of divine whipping.
30. The phrase *epignous en heautō tēn ex autou dynamin exelthousan* ('perceiving in himself the power having gone out from him') presents healing power as something that flows from Jesus and that he can detect. The word *dynamis* ('power') here is almost tangible — it has direction and movement. Jesus's question is not about information (he will identify the woman) but about relationship — he refuses to let the healing be anonymous.
31. The disciples' response borders on exasperation — in a crushing crowd, everyone is touching him. They cannot distinguish between the incidental contact of the crowd and the deliberate, faith-driven touch of the woman. The imperfect *elegon* ('they were saying') suggests they pressed the point.
32. The imperfect *perieblepeto* ('he was looking around') indicates a sustained, searching gaze. The feminine participle *tēn touto poiēsasan* ('the woman who had done this') reveals that Jesus already knew it was a woman. His searching look gives her the opportunity to come forward voluntarily rather than being exposed.
33. Her fear (*phobētheisa*) and trembling (*tremousa*) may reflect fear of rebuke for transmitting impurity, fear of losing the healing, or awe at the divine power she has experienced. She tells 'the whole truth' (*pasan tēn alētheian*) — her twelve years of suffering, her desperate act, her healing. The public

confession is both brave and necessary: Jesus will not allow healing to be separated from relationship.

34. The address 'Daughter' (thygatēr) restores her to family — she has been isolated for twelve years, and Jesus claims her as kin. The phrase hē pistis sou sesōken se ('your faith has saved you') uses the perfect tense — the salvation is accomplished and enduring. The verb sōzō again carries both physical and spiritual dimensions. 'Go in peace' (hypage eis eirēnēn) is the Hebrew shalom blessing — 'go into wholeness.' The command isthi hygiēs ('be healthy') confirms the healing as permanent.
35. The timing is devastating — 'while he was still speaking' (eti autou lalountos), the worst news arrives. The delay caused by the hemorrhaging woman's interruption has cost Jairus his daughter. The verb skylleis ('trouble, bother, harass') suggests they view any further appeal as pointless. The message assumes death is the absolute limit of Jesus's power. Mark's intercalation technique creates maximum dramatic tension.
36. The verb parakousas can mean either 'overhearing' or 'ignoring/disregarding.' Both readings work: Jesus either overhears the message meant for Jairus, or he deliberately disregards its hopeless conclusion. His response — mē phobou, monon pisteue ('do not fear, only believe') — calls Jairus to the same kind of faith the hemorrhaging woman demonstrated. The present imperative pisteue ('keep believing') demands sustained trust in the face of apparent impossibility.
37. The inner circle of three — Peter, James, and John — appears here for the first time. They will also be present at the Transfiguration (9:2) and Gethsemane (14:33). This select group witnesses events too profound or intimate for the larger group. The exclusion of others creates privacy for the family and limits witnesses to the raising.
38. The noun thorybos ('commotion, uproar, tumult') describes the scene of ritual mourning. Professional mourners would have been summoned quickly; Jewish custom required even the poorest family to hire at least two flute players and one wailing woman (Mishnah Ketubbot 4:4). The verb alalazontas ('wailing, shrieking') describes the loud, ritualized cries of formal lamentation.
39. Jesus's statement 'the child is not dead but sleeping' (to paidion ouk apethanen alla katheudei) has been interpreted as either (1) a metaphor for death — the girl is dead but Jesus views death as temporary sleep, or (2) a literal claim that she is merely unconscious. Given the certainty of the death announcement (v. 35) and the mockery that follows, Mark appears to present an actual death that Jesus redefines as sleep because he intends to 'wake' her. The metaphor of death as sleep becomes standard Christian language (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).
40. The verb kategelōn ('were laughing at, ridiculing, mocking') indicates contemptuous dismissal. Their laughter confirms the girl is genuinely dead — they know death when they see it. The verb ekbalōn ('having thrown out') is the same forceful word used for casting out demons. Jesus removes the scorners and creates an intimate space with only the parents and the three disciples.
41. The preservation of the Aramaic talitha koum (or koumi in some manuscripts) is one of several instances where Mark retains Jesus's actual spoken words in Aramaic (cf. 7:34 ephphatha; 15:34 eloi eloi). Talitha means 'little girl' or 'lamb' (a term of endearment), and koum is the imperative 'arise, get up.' The tender address combined with the authoritative command creates a powerful contrast. Jesus touches a corpse, which would render him ritually unclean — but as with the leper, purity flows from Jesus rather than impurity flowing to him.
42. The girl's response is immediate (euthys) and complete — she not only rises but walks. Her age — twelve years — creates a link with the hemorrhaging woman (twelve years of illness). The woman has been ill for the girl's entire lifetime. The phrase exestēsan ekstasei megalē ('they were astonished with a great astonishment') uses a cognate construction for emphasis — the witnesses are utterly overwhelmed.
43. The messianic secret returns: diesteilato autois polla ('he ordered them repeatedly and emphatically'). Given that the mourners and crowd already know the girl died, keeping the raising secret seems impossible — yet Jesus commands it. The final detail — 'give her something to eat' — is profoundly human after the divine miracle. The command confirms the physical reality of her restoration: she is truly alive, with a living body that needs food. The juxtaposition of cosmic power and domestic tenderness is characteristically Markan.

6

Summary: *Mark 6 is the longest chapter in the Gospel and marks a turning point. Jesus is rejected at his hometown of Nazareth, then sends the Twelve on their first mission. Mark intercalates the account of John the Baptist's execution by Herod Antipas — a grim foreshadowing of Jesus's own fate. The chapter then presents two great wilderness miracles: the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus walking on the sea. The chapter closes with a summary of widespread healing activity in Gennesaret.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Nazareth rejection establishes that even Jesus's own community cannot see past his ordinary origins. The mission of the Twelve extends Jesus's authority through delegation. The death of John the Baptist is Mark's longest non-Jesus narrative and functions as a dark mirror of what awaits Jesus. The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle (besides the resurrection) found in all four Gospels. The sea-walking scene contains the mysterious phrase 'he intended to pass them by' — echoing Old Testament theophanies where God 'passes by' (Exodus 33:19-22; 1 Kings 19:11).*

Translation Friction: Herod's identity as 'king' (v. 14) is technically inaccurate — he was a tetrarch, not a king. Mark may use the popular designation or employ irony. The relationship between Herodias, Philip, and Herod is historically complex. The 'passing by' in verse 48 is theologically loaded and we render it literally with a note on the theophanic background.

Connections: The feeding miracle echoes Elisha feeding a hundred men (2 Kings 4:42-44), Moses and the manna (Exodus 16), and anticipates the Last Supper. The sea-walking draws on divine prerogatives — God alone 'treads on the waves of the sea' (Job 9:8). The disciples' hardened hearts (v. 52) echo the Pharaoh motif from Exodus.

1He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is this wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works performed through his hands? 3Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household." 5He was not able to do any mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6He was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went around among the villages teaching. 7He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two, and he gave them authority over unclean spirits. 8He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff — no bread, no bag, no money in their belts. 9They were to wear sandals but not put on two tunics. 10He said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11If any place will not welcome you and they will not listen to you, as you leave, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." 12So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. 14King Herod heard about it, for Jesus's name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15Others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16But when Herod heard about it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded — he has been raised!" 17For Herod himself had sent men to arrest John and had him bound in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19So Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not, 20For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him. And when he listened to him, he did numerous things, and listened to him gladly. 21An opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. 22When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23He swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25Immediately she hurried back to the king and made her request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28Brought his head in a charger, and offered it to the damsel — and the damsel offered it to her mother. 29When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. 30The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him everything they had done and taught. 31He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no opportunity even to eat. 32So they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33But many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. 35When the hour had grown late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place and the hour is already late. 36Send them away so they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Should we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" 38He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39He directed them to have everyone sit down in groups on the green grass. 40

They sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²Everyone ate and was satisfied. ⁴³They picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴Those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. ⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸He saw them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he came toward them, walking on the sea, and he intended to pass by them. ⁴⁹But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and screamed, ⁵⁰Since they all noticed him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and says to them, Be of good cheer — it is I. Be not afraid. ⁵¹He got into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were utterly astounded, ⁵²Indeed, since they considered not the miracle of the loaves — for their heart was hardened. ⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized him ⁵⁵Ran by way of that whole region round about, and started to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they listened to he was. ⁵⁶Wherever he went — into villages, towns, or countryside — they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him to let them touch even the fringe of his garment. And all who touched it were healed.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The word *patris* ('hometown, fatherland') refers to Nazareth, though Mark does not name it here (cf. 1:9). The historical present *erchetai* ('he comes') is characteristic of Mark's vivid narrative style. Jesus returns home, but after all that has happened, the homecoming will prove uncomfortable.
2. The townspeople's questions acknowledge both Jesus's wisdom and power but frame them as a puzzle rather than a revelation. The passive *dothesia* ('given') is a divine passive — they recognize that his wisdom comes from God but stumble over the delivery mechanism. The word *dynameis* ('mighty works, miracles') is plural, indicating they knew of his wider ministry.
3. The title *tektōn* ('carpenter, builder, craftsman') identifies Jesus by his trade — a worker in wood and possibly stone. Mark alone calls Jesus himself a carpenter; Matthew 13:55 calls him 'the carpenter's son.' The identification as 'son of Mary' (rather than 'son of Joseph') is unusual and may suggest Joseph had died, or may carry a hint of illegitimacy. Four brothers are named, and sisters (plural) are mentioned. The verb *eskandalizōnto* ('were offended, stumbled') indicates that his ordinariness became the obstacle to faith.
4. The proverb has parallels in Greek literature and appears to have been widely known. Mark's version is the most expansive: three concentric circles of rejection — hometown (*patris*), relatives (*syngeneusin*), and household (*oikia*). Each circle narrows toward greater intimacy and greater pain. Jesus implicitly identifies himself as a prophet — a claim with dangerous implications given what happened to prophets.
5. The bold statement *ouk edynato* ('he was not able, could not') is remarkable — Mark presents unbelief as genuinely limiting Jesus's power, not just his willingness. Matthew 13:58 softens this to 'he did not do many mighty works.' The exception — healing a few sick people — shows that even limited faith allowed some access to Jesus's power.
6. The verb *ethaumazen* ('was amazed, marveled') is used elsewhere in Mark for human amazement at Jesus; here uniquely, Jesus is amazed at human unbelief. The word *apistia* ('unbelief, faithlessness, lack of trust') is the opposite of the *pistis* ('faith') he commends elsewhere. Jesus does not remain to argue but moves on to the surrounding villages.
7. The verb *apostellein* ('to send out') is the root of 'apostle' — the Twelve are now being sent. Pairing them 'two by two' (*dyo dyo*) follows the Old Testament principle that testimony requires two witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15) and provides mutual support. The authority (*exousia*) over unclean spirits extends Jesus's own exorcism ministry through his delegates.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 19:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. Mark permits a staff (*rhabdon*), while Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3 forbid even that — a minor discrepancy among the Synoptics. The *pēra* ('bag') was a traveler's knapsack. The *chalkon* ('copper, bronze money') represents the smallest denomination. The radical simplicity forces dependence on God and the hospitality of those they serve.
9. Mark allows sandals; Matthew 10:10 forbids them. The *chitōn* ('tunic, inner garment') was the basic garment worn next to the skin. Forbidding a second tunic means traveling without a change of clothes or an extra layer for cold nights — radical vulnerability and trust.
10. The instruction to stay in one house prevents the missionaries from trading up to better accommodations — they are to accept whatever hospitality is offered and remain loyal to their host. This practice also provides a stable base for ministry in each location.
11. Shaking off dust (*ektinaxate ton choun*) was a Jewish gesture performed when leaving Gentile territory — symbolically removing foreign contamination. Directed at fellow Jews, it declares that the rejecting town has placed itself outside the covenant community. The SBLGNT does not

- include the Sodom and Gomorrah comparison found in some manuscripts and in the KJV; this is a later scribal addition harmonizing with Matthew 10:15.
12. The Twelve's message — *metanoōsin* ('that they should repent') — echoes Jesus's opening proclamation in 1:15. They extend his call for repentance to a wider audience. The verb *kēryssō* ('proclaim, preach as a herald') is the same verb used for Jesus's own preaching.
 13. The anointing with oil (*ēleiphon elaiō*) is unique to Mark's account of this mission. Oil was used medicinally in the ancient world (cf. Isaiah 1:6; Luke 10:34), but here it functions as a vehicle for divine healing — a practice the early church continued (James 5:14). The combination of exorcism and healing mirrors Jesus's own ministry pattern.
 13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 1:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
 14. Mark calls Herod Antipas 'king' (*basileus*), though his actual title was 'tetrarch' (ruler of a quarter). This may be popular usage, Markan irony, or deliberate contrast with Jesus as the true king. The SBLGNT reads 'they were saying' (elegant, third person plural) rather than 'he said,' attributing the opinion about John to popular rumor rather than to Herod directly. The belief that John had risen reflects a popular view that the powers of a martyred prophet could be transferred or amplified after death.
 15. Three theories about Jesus circulate: resurrected John, returned Elijah (expected before the Day of the Lord, Malachi 4:5), or a new prophet in the line of the great prophets. Notably, none of the popular opinions identifies Jesus as the Messiah — the true answer that Peter will give in 8:29. These same three theories reappear in 8:28.
 15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Malachi 4:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
 16. The emphatic word order places 'whom I beheaded' (*hon egō apekephalisa*) first for dramatic impact. Herod's guilty conscience interprets Jesus through the lens of his own crime. The verb *apekephalisa* ('I beheaded') is blunt and brutal. His conviction that John has risen suggests both superstitious fear and an inability to escape the consequences of his deed.
 17. The flashback begins. The historical situation: Herod Antipas divorced his first wife (a Nabatean princess) to marry Herodias, who had been wife of his half-brother. Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.5.1-2) confirms the basic story but attributes John's execution to political fears rather than the banquet scenario Mark describes. The phrase 'his brother Philip's wife' identifies the relationship that made the marriage unlawful under Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21.
 17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Leviticus 18:16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
 18. The imperfect *elegen* ('he was saying, kept saying') indicates this was not a one-time confrontation but a repeated prophetic challenge. John stands in the tradition of prophets who confronted kings — Nathan before David (2 Samuel 12), Elijah before Ahab (1 Kings 21). The prohibition is rooted in Leviticus 18:16.
 18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Samuel 12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
 18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
 18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 18:16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
 19. The verb *eneichen* ('held against, bore a grudge, harbored resentment') describes Herodias's sustained hostility. The parallel with Jezebel seeking to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:2) is unmistakable and likely intentional — John is the new Elijah opposed by a new Jezebel. Herodias's desire to kill is blocked by Herod's ambivalence (v. 20).
 19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Kings 19:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
 20. Herod's complex response to John — fear, recognition of his holiness, protection, perplexity, and fascination — makes him one of Mark's most psychologically nuanced characters. The SBLGNT reads *ēporei* ('was perplexed, at a loss') rather than *epoiei* ('did many things') found in some manuscripts. Herod is drawn to John's message but lacks the will to act on it — a tragic portrait of partial openness to truth.
 21. The word *eukairos* ('opportune, convenient') is loaded with dark irony — it is opportune for Herodias's scheme. The guest list — *megistanes* ('courtiers, nobles'), *chiliarchoi* ('commanders of a thousand,' military officers), and *prōtoi* ('leading men, elite') — represents the full spectrum of Galilean power. The birthday banquet (*genesiois*) sets the stage for the grim request that follows.
 22. The SBLGNT reads 'his daughter Herodias' (*tēs thygatros autou Hērōdiados*), which is textually difficult since the daughter is traditionally named Salome (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.4). Some manuscripts read 'the daughter of Herodias herself.' The dance of a royal princess before a banquet of men was culturally extraordinary and suggests Herodias's manipulation. The rash promise echoes Esther 5:3, 6 and 7:2, where the Persian king makes a similar open-ended offer.
 22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Esther 5:3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

23. The oath (ōmosen) escalates the promise — Herod binds himself before his guests. The phrase 'up to half my kingdom' echoes Esther 5:3 almost verbatim. Since Herod was a tetrarch ruling at Rome's pleasure, the offer of half his kingdom was an empty boast, but it creates a binding social obligation.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Esther 5:3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. The girl's question reveals she is acting as Herodias's agent. Herodias's response is instant and specific — she has been waiting for this opportunity (the 'opportune day' of v. 21). The request for John's 'head' (kephalēn) is shockingly literal and demands immediate execution.
25. The word euthys ('immediately') and meta spoudēs ('with haste, urgency') convey the girl's rush to lock in the request before Herod can reconsider. The addition 'on a platter' (epi pinaki) adds grotesque detail — the prophet's head served as a banquet dish. The demand exautēs ('right now, at once') leaves no room for delay or negotiation.
26. The word perilypos ('deeply grieved, exceedingly sorrowful') is the same word used for Jesus in Gethsemane (14:34). But Herod's sorrow does not lead to right action — he is trapped by his oaths (plural, horkous — he had sworn repeatedly) and by social pressure (the guests witnessed the oath). Fear of losing face costs John his life. Herod chooses honor before men over honoring God.
27. The Greek spekoulatōr is a Latin loanword (speculator) — a member of the bodyguard who could serve as executioner. The Latin military term is appropriate for Herod's court and reflects Mark's Roman audience. The execution happens with grim efficiency — euthys ('immediately') marking the speed of the killing.
28. The chain of delivery — executioner to girl to mother — is narrated with chilling matter-of-factness. The prophet's head passes through three sets of hands like a dish at a banquet. The scene is a grim anti-feast that inverts the coming banquet of the five thousand.
29. John's disciples perform the act of burial, paralleling what Joseph of Arimathea will do for Jesus (15:46). The word ptōma ('corpse, fallen body') is blunt — literally 'something that has fallen.' The burial in a tomb (mnēmeiō) provides closure to John's story and anticipates the empty tomb of chapter 16.
30. This is the only place in Mark where the Twelve are called 'apostles' (apostoloi, 'sent ones') — the title applies specifically to their role as commissioned delegates who have now returned from their mission. Their report covers both actions (hosa epoiēsan, 'what they did') and teaching (hosa edidaxan, 'what they taught'), mirroring Jesus's own ministry of deed and word.
31. Jesus recognizes the disciples' need for rest after their mission. The phrase kat' idian ('privately, by themselves') seeks solitude. The detail that they had no time to eat (oude phagein eukairoun) echoes 3:20. The word eukairoun ('had opportunity') uses the same root as the 'opportune' (eukairos) day of Herod's banquet (v. 21) — a subtle verbal link between the two scenes.
32. The boat provides transportation to the 'deserted place' (erēmon topon) — the wilderness that will become the setting for the feeding miracle. The attempt at privacy will be frustrated by the crowds who see them leaving.
33. The crowd's determination is remarkable — they outran the boat on foot (pezē), traveling along the northern shore of the lake. The verb synedramom ('ran together') describes a mass rush from multiple towns converging on the destination. The verb proēlthon ('arrived ahead of, preceded') means the crowd was waiting when the boat landed.
34. The verb esplanchnisthē ('was moved with compassion') describes the same deep, visceral response as in 1:41. The simile 'sheep without a shepherd' (probata mē echonta poimena) echoes Numbers 27:17, where Moses asks God to appoint a successor so Israel will not be 'like sheep without a shepherd.' It also evokes Ezekiel 34, where God condemns Israel's failed shepherds and promises to shepherd the flock himself. Jesus's response to the shepherdless crowd is to teach — in Mark, teaching is the primary expression of pastoral care.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 27:17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Ezekiel 34. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. The disciples emphasize two problems: the isolation of the location (erēmos estin ho topos) and the lateness of the hour (hōra pollē). Both are practical concerns about feeding a large crowd in the wilderness — a problem that evokes the wilderness feeding narratives of Exodus and Numbers.
36. The disciples propose the practical solution: dismiss the crowd to fend for themselves. The verb apolyson ('send away, dismiss') is an aorist imperative suggesting urgency. The surrounding farms (agrous) and villages (kōmas) would have limited supplies for such a multitude.
37. The emphatic hymeis ('you yourselves') makes the command startling — Jesus places the responsibility on the disciples. Two hundred denarii was roughly eight months' wages for a laborer. Their response drips with incredulity, possibly sarcasm. The denarius was a Roman silver coin, the standard day's wage.
38. Jesus redirects from what they cannot do to what they have. The instruction 'go and see' (hypagete idete) forces them to take inventory of their actual resources. The five loaves were likely flat barley bread, the common food of the poor. Two fish (ichthyas) were probably dried or pickled fish from the lake.
39. The Greek symposia symposia ('group by group') is a distributive repetition — the crowd was organized into table-fellowship groups, the word symposion normally meaning a drinking party or dinner gathering. The detail 'green grass' (chlōrō chortō) indicates spring — near Passover (cf. John 6:4) when grass would be green in Galilee. The organized seating transforms a chaotic crowd into an ordered meal.

40. The word *prasiai prasiai* ('garden beds, garden beds') paints a visual picture — from above, the arranged groups looked like rectangular garden plots. The groupings of hundreds and fifties echo the organization of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 18:25), reinforcing the new-exodus theme of this wilderness feeding.
40. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 18:25 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
41. The four verbs — took (*labōn*), blessed (*eulogēsen*), broke (*kateklasen*), gave (*edidou*) — form the pattern that will reappear at the Last Supper (14:22) and become the structure of the Christian Eucharist. Looking up to heaven (*anablepsas eis ton ouranon*) acknowledges God as the source. The imperfect *edidou* ('kept giving') suggests the multiplication happened progressively as the bread was distributed.
42. The verb *echortasthēsan* ('were satisfied, filled to the full') originally described the feeding of animals — to be gorged, fully fed. Its use here emphasizes the abundance of the provision. The word *pantes* ('all, everyone') ensures no one was left out.
43. The twelve baskets (*dōdeka kophinōn*) correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles — the symbolism is likely intentional. The *kophinos* was a wicker basket distinctively associated with Jewish travelers (Juvenal, *Satire* 3.14). The surplus exceeds the initial supply, demonstrating superabundant provision.
44. The number *pentakischilioi andres* ('five thousand men') counts only adult males. Matthew 14:21 adds 'besides women and children,' suggesting the total crowd was much larger. The number may echo the military organization of the wilderness groups (v. 40), creating an image of a new Israel being fed by a new Moses in a new wilderness.
45. The verb *ēnagkasen* ('compelled, forced, made') is unusually strong — Jesus pressured the reluctant disciples to leave. John 6:15 explains why: the crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force, and Jesus needed to separate the disciples from the political enthusiasm. The word *euthys* ('immediately') marks the urgency. *Bethsaida* ('house of fishing') was a town on the northeastern shore.
46. The verb *apotaxamenos* ('having said farewell, having taken leave of') indicates a deliberate departure. Jesus again seeks solitude for prayer (cf. 1:35). The mountain (*to oros*) is a place of encounter with God in biblical tradition. This is Jesus's second recorded prayer in Mark, following a major public event, as in 1:35.
47. The scene is set with stark simplicity: the boat in the middle (*en mesō*) of the sea, Jesus alone (*monos*) on the land. The separation creates both physical and symbolic distance. The Sea of Galilee is roughly 7 miles wide at its widest point; 'in the middle' means 3-4 miles from shore.
48. That Jesus 'saw' (*idōn*) them from the mountain in darkness implies supernatural sight. The verb *basanizomenous* ('being tortured, strained, distressed') conveys the physical agony of rowing against a headwind. The fourth watch was 3-6 AM (Roman time reckoning). The phrase *ēthelen parelthein autous* ('he intended to pass by them') is the most theologically loaded detail; in the Old Testament, God 'passes by' Moses (Exodus 33:19-22) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:11) in theophanies — divine self-revelations. Jesus walking on the sea and intending to 'pass by' identifies him with the God of Israel.
48. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 33:19-22 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
48. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 19:11 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
49. The word *phantasma* ('apparition, ghost, phantom') reflects their terror — they interpret the figure on the water as a spirit of the dead. The verb *anekraxan* ('screamed, cried out') conveys raw terror. Their inability to recognize Jesus is part of Mark's theme of the disciples' persistent blindness.
50. The phrase *egō eimi* ('it is I' or 'I AM') is both a simple self-identification and potentially a divine self-revelation — the same phrase used by God in Exodus 3:14 (in the Septuagint) and Isaiah 43:10. In the context of a sea-theophany, the reader is meant to hear both levels. The command 'do not be afraid' (*mē phobeisthe*) is the standard reassurance in divine appearances (Genesis 15:1; Isaiah 41:10; Daniel 10:12).
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 3:14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 43:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 15:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 41:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 10:12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
51. The wind ceasing (*ekopasen*) when Jesus enters the boat echoes the storm-calming of 4:39 but without a verbal command — his mere presence stills the wind. The phrase *lian ek perissou* ('exceedingly, beyond all measure, utterly') piles up intensifiers to convey the disciples' overwhelming astonishment. The verb *existanto* ('were beside themselves, astounded') indicates they were mentally overwhelmed.
52. Mark's editorial comment is devastating: the disciples' astonishment at the sea-walking reveals that they missed the meaning of the feeding miracle. If they had understood *epi tois artois* ('about the loaves') — that Jesus had divine creative power — the sea-walking would not have shocked them. The phrase *hē kardia pepōrōmenē* ('their heart was hardened/calcified') uses the same word applied to Pharaoh's heart in the Septuagint and to the Pharisees in 3:5. Mark places the disciples dangerously close to Jesus's opponents.

53. Gennesaret (Gennēsaret) was a fertile plain on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, south of Capernaum. The verb *prosōrmisthēsan* ('moored, anchored') is a nautical technical term, suggesting they pulled up at a landing or dock.
54. The adverb *euthys* ('immediately') once more. The verb *epignontes* ('recognizing, identifying') indicates Jesus was known by sight in this region — his reputation and face were familiar from previous ministry.
55. The verb *periedramon* ('ran around, ran throughout') indicates a frantic, widespread mobilization. The word *krabattois* ('mats, pallets') is the same as in 2:4 — poor people's beds on which the sick were carried. The phrase *hopou ēkouon hoti estin* ('wherever they heard he was') shows the crowd tracking Jesus's movements.
56. This summary statement covers an extended period of ministry. The *kraspedon* ('fringe, tassel, border') refers to the tassels (*tzitzit*) on the corners of a Jewish garment prescribed by Numbers 15:38-39. The desire to touch the fringe echoes the hemorrhaging woman's faith (5:28). The verb *esōzonto* ('were being saved/healed') is imperfect, indicating continuous, repeated healing. The word encompasses both physical restoration and the deeper salvation it signifies.
56. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 15:38-39. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

7

Summary: *Mark 7 centers on the theme of purity — what truly makes a person clean or unclean. Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem challenge Jesus about his disciples' failure to observe handwashing traditions. Jesus responds with a sharp critique of human tradition that nullifies God's commandment, using the 'Corban' example. He then teaches the crowd that defilement comes from within, not from external contact with food. The chapter shifts to Gentile territory where Jesus heals the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman after a remarkable exchange, and then heals a deaf man with a speech impediment in the Decapolis.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Mark's parenthetical comment in verse 19 — 'thus he declared all foods clean' — is one of the most theologically significant editorial asides in the Gospel, effectively ending the Levitical food laws. The Syrophoenician woman is the only person in Mark who wins an argument with Jesus, and her faith opens the door to Gentile inclusion. The Aramaic word 'Ephphatha' preserved in verse 34 is another instance of Mark retaining Jesus's actual spoken words. The chapter moves from Jewish purity concerns to Gentile healing, enacting the very boundary-crossing that the teaching about inner purity makes possible.*

Translation Friction: *The 'all foods clean' comment in verse 19 is debated — is it Mark's theological interpretation or Jesus's explicit teaching? The Greek is ambiguous. The exchange with the Syrophoenician woman contains language ('dogs,' *kynaria*) that sounds harsh; we render it faithfully and note the cultural context. The geographic itinerary in verse 31 is circuitous and difficult to map precisely.*

Connections: *The Corban teaching connects to the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12) and prophetic critiques of empty ritual (Isaiah 29:13). The Syrophoenician woman's story anticipates the Gentile mission. The healing of the deaf-mute echoes Isaiah 35:5-6 ('the ears of the deaf shall be opened... the tongue of the mute shall sing'). The 'Ephphatha' miracle in Gentile territory suggests the messianic age is dawning beyond Israel's borders.*

1The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. 2They noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled — that is, unwashed — hands. 3(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands carefully, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions they observe, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and dining couches.) 5So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied accurately about you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commandments of human beings.' 8You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." 9He also said to them, "How skillfully you set aside the commandment of God in order to establish your own tradition! 10For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must certainly die.' 11But you say, 'If a man tells his father or mother, "Whatever support you might have received from me is Corban"' — that is, an offering to God

— ¹²You suffer him no more to do anything for his father or his mother; ¹³Making the message of God of none effect by way of your tradition, which you have delivered — and numerous such like things do you. ¹⁴He called the crowd to him again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them." ¹⁷When he had left the crowd and entered a house, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸He said to them, "Are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile them, ¹⁹On account of the fact that it entereth not into his inner self, but into the belly, and goes out into the draught, purging all meats? ²⁰He said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles them. ²¹For from within, out of the human heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:. ²³All these evil things come from within and defile a person." ²⁴From there he set out and went to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know, but he could not escape notice. ²⁵Immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him and came and fell at his feet. ²⁶The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth. She kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸But she answered him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹He said to her, "Because of this word, go — the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. ³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis. ³²They brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³He took him aside from the crowd privately, put his fingers into the man's ears, and after spitting, touched his tongue. ³⁴Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, "Ephphatha" — that is, "Be opened." ³⁵Immediately his ears were opened, the binding of his tongue was released, and he spoke clearly. ³⁶He ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more widely they proclaimed it. ³⁷They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

- As in 3:22, scribes from Jerusalem represent an official investigation. Their arrival 'from Jerusalem' (apo Hierosolymōn) indicates these are not local critics but representatives of the central religious authority. The historical present *synagontai* ('they gather') creates narrative immediacy.
- The word *koinais* ('common, defiled, ritually impure') does not mean physically dirty but ritually contaminated. Mark provides the parenthetical explanation 'that is, unwashed' (*tout' estin aniptoiois*) for his Gentile readers who would not know Jewish purity customs. The issue is ritual hand-washing before meals, a Pharisaic tradition not required by the Torah itself.
- Mark inserts a long parenthetical explanation (vv. 3-4) for readers unfamiliar with Jewish customs — strong evidence that his audience was predominantly Gentile. The word *pygmē* ('with a fist' or 'carefully, thoroughly') is debated — it may describe a specific washing technique or simply mean 'diligently.' The 'tradition of the elders' (*paradosis tōn presbyterōn*) refers to the oral law later codified in the Mishnah.
- The verb *baptisōntai* ('wash, immerse') is the same root as 'baptize,' suggesting full immersion rather than merely rinsing hands. The marketplace (*agora*) was a place of contact with Gentiles and other sources of ritual contamination. The list of items requiring purification — cups (*potērion*), pitchers (*xestōn*, a Latin loanword from *sextarius*), copper vessels (*chalkiōn*), and dining couches (*klinōn*) — illustrates how extensively purity concerns pervaded daily life.
- The verb *peripatousin* ('walk') is a metaphor for conduct or lifestyle — 'why do your disciples not live according to...' The question holds Jesus responsible for his disciples' behavior, as in 2:24. The phrase 'tradition of the elders' places oral tradition on par with Scripture — precisely the equation Jesus will challenge.
- Jesus opens with a devastating quotation from Isaiah 29:13, applying it directly to his questioners. The word *hypokritēs* ('hypocrite') originally meant a stage actor — one who wears a mask and plays a role. Jesus accuses them of performing religion without genuine devotion. The quote comes from the Septuagint, which differs slightly from the Hebrew text of Isaiah.
- [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 29:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- The word *matēn* ('in vain, to no purpose, uselessly') declares their worship empty and ineffective. The core accusation: human traditions (*entalmata anthrōpōn*) have been elevated to the status of divine teaching (*didaskalias*). The verse strikes at the heart of the Pharisaic project of building a 'fence around the Torah' — Jesus sees the fence as replacing the Torah.

8. The contrast is stark: *aphentes* ('abandoning, leaving behind, forsaking') the commandment of God versus *krateite* ('holding fast, gripping, clinging to') human tradition. The verb *kratein* ('to hold, grip') implies a tight, determined grasp. They cling to tradition while letting go of God's actual command.
9. The adverb *kalōs* ('well, skillfully, finely') is biting sarcasm — 'how expertly you reject God's command.' The verb *atheteite* ('set aside, nullify, reject') is a legal term for annulling a contract or agreement. Jesus moves from a general critique (vv. 6-8) to a specific example (vv. 10-13).
10. Jesus cites two commandments: Exodus 20:12 (the fifth commandment) and Exodus 21:17. Together they establish the inviolable obligation of children to care for and respect their parents. The phrase *thanatō teleutatō* ('let him surely die, let him die the death') is an emphatic death sentence using the cognate dative construction from the Septuagint.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 20:12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 21:17 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The Aramaic word *korban* (from the Hebrew *qorban*, meaning 'offering, gift dedicated to God') refers to a vow dedicating money or property to the temple. Mark translates it for his Gentile readers: *ho estin dōron* ('which is, a gift'). The practice Jesus critiques allowed a person to declare assets 'Corban' and thereby exempt them from being used to support aging parents — technically fulfilling a religious vow while violating the commandment to honor father and mother.
12. The verb *aphiete* ('you allow, permit') indicates that the religious authorities enforced the Corban vow even against the person's later desire to help their parents. Once declared, the vow was considered binding — tradition trumped the commandment. The irony: a supposedly pious act (vowing to God) is used to evade a clear divine command (caring for parents).
13. The verb *akyrountes* ('nullifying, invalidating, rendering void') is a legal term for canceling a valid document. The 'word of God' (*ton logon tou theou*) — the Torah itself — is voided by human tradition. The final remark, 'and many similar things you do' (*paromoia toiauta polla poieite*), generalizes: the Corban example is one of many instances where tradition overrides Scripture.
14. Jesus shifts from the scribes and Pharisees to the general crowd (*ton ochlon*). The double imperative — *akousate* ('listen') and *synete* ('understand') — demands not just hearing but comprehension. What follows is a teaching for everyone, not just the religious elite.
15. This is a revolutionary principle: defilement is internal, not external. The verb *koinōsai* ('make common, defile, pollute') is the same word from verse 2. Jesus overturns the entire external purity system in a single sentence. The logic is spatial: nothing from outside (*exōthen*) entering (*eisporeuomenon*) can contaminate; only what exits (*ekporeuomena*) from within defiles. The implications for food laws, Gentile contact, and the whole purity system are enormous.
16. Verse 16 does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts and is not included in the SBLGNT critical text. It is a scribal addition harmonizing with 4:9 and 4:23. Some later manuscripts and the KJV include it: 'If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.' We follow the SBLGNT in omitting it.
17. The pattern from chapter 4 repeats: public parabolic teaching followed by private explanation to the disciples. The disciples' need for explanation underscores their persistent difficulty in understanding. They call Jesus's statement a 'parable' (*parabolē*), meaning they recognized it as figurative speech requiring interpretation.
18. Jesus's exasperation is evident: *kai hymeis* ('you also, even you') — even the insiders need explanation. The adjective *asynetoi* ('without understanding, senseless') is blunt. Jesus repeats his principle and now explains the physiological reason why external food cannot defile spiritually.
19. Jesus's argument is straightforward: food enters the stomach (*koilia*), not the heart (*kardia*), and exits through the digestive system into the sewer (*aphedrōna*, 'latrine, drain'). The heart in biblical anthropology is the seat of moral and spiritual life. The parenthetical comment *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* can be read as the subject being Jesus ('he declared all foods clean') or as the process of digestion ('purifying all foods'). Most modern translations follow the former reading, understanding this as Mark's theological commentary declaring the end of kosher food laws. This is one of the most consequential editorial comments in the New Testament.
20. Jesus returns to the positive side of his principle: defilement originates from within. The repeated emphasis on what 'comes out' (*ekporeuomenon*) prepares for the vice list that follows, which catalogs the internal sources of true defilement.
21. The heart (*kardia*) is the source of all moral contamination. The list begins with *dialogismoi hoi kakoi* ('evil thoughts, wicked deliberations') as the root, then specifies manifestations. The word *porneiai* ('sexual immorality') covers all forms of sexual wrongdoing, broader than just adultery or prostitution. The list has twelve items, possibly echoing the twelve sons/tribes or simply providing a comprehensive catalog.
22. The list moves from plural actions (sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery — things done) to singular dispositions (greed, wickedness, deceit — character traits). The 'evil eye' (*ophthalmos ponēros*) is a Semitic idiom for envy or stinginess. The word *aselgeia* ('sensuality, debauchery, licentiousness') refers to unrestrained self-indulgence. *Aphrosynē* ('foolishness') in biblical wisdom literature is not intellectual deficiency but moral and spiritual blindness — the refusal to acknowledge God.
23. The summary restates the principle: *panta tauta ta ponēra esōthen ekporeuetai* ('all these evil things come from within'). The argument is complete: true defilement is moral, not ritual; internal, not external. This teaching dismantles the entire system of external purity that the Pharisees' question

presupposed.

24. Jesus travels into unambiguously Gentile territory — Tyre was a Phoenician coastal city. The SBLGNT reads 'Tyre' only; 'and Sidon' appears in later manuscripts. His desire for anonymity (*oudena ēthelen gnōnai*, 'he wanted no one to know') again fails — as in 1:45, his reputation precedes him. The timing is significant: after declaring all foods clean and teaching that external purity does not matter, Jesus crosses into the unclean Gentile world.
25. The word *euthys* ('immediately') drives the narrative. The diminutive *thygatrion* ('little daughter') conveys the mother's tenderness. The woman's prostration (*prosepesen*, 'fell before') indicates desperate supplication. An unclean spirit in a Gentile girl — the encounter concentrates every purity boundary that Jesus has been challenging.
26. Mark provides a double identification: *Hellēnis* ('Greek' — culturally Hellenistic, i.e., pagan) and *Syrophoinikissa* ('Syrophoenician' — ethnically from the Phoenician region of Syria, distinguished from Libyphoenicians of North Africa). The imperfect *ērōta* ('kept asking') indicates persistent, repeated pleading.
27. This is one of the most debated sayings in the Gospels. The 'children' (*tekna*) represent Israel; the 'dogs' (*kynaria*, diminutive — 'little dogs, house dogs,' not wild street dogs) represent Gentiles. The word 'first' (*prōton*) is crucial to Mark — it implies a sequence, not an exclusion: Israel first, then Gentiles. The diminutive *kynaria* softens the harshness somewhat — these are household pets, not scavenging strays. Some interpret Jesus as testing the woman's faith; others see him articulating the salvation-historical priority of Israel that the woman then reframes.
28. The woman does not reject Jesus's metaphor but brilliantly extends it: she accepts the priority of the children but argues that feeding the dogs does not require depriving the children — crumbs fall naturally from the table while the children eat. Her response demonstrates both humility (she does not claim to be a child at the table) and bold faith (she insists that Jesus's power is so abundant that even the overflow is sufficient). She is the only person in Mark who outargues Jesus.
29. Jesus commends her *logos* ('word, saying, argument') — it is the quality of her faith as expressed in her reply that moves him. The perfect *exelēlythen* ('has gone out') indicates the exorcism is already accomplished at a distance — Jesus does not go to the house, touch the girl, or speak a word of command. The healing is performed solely on the basis of the mother's faith expressed through clever, humble argumentation. This is the only distance healing of an exorcism in the Synoptics.
30. The perfect participles — *beblēmenon* ('lying, thrown/placed') and *exelēluthos* ('having gone out') — describe the completed states the woman finds. The child is at rest on the bed (no longer convulsing or disturbed), and the demon has departed. The scene is quiet and domestic — a sharp contrast to the violent Gerasene exorcism. Faith, not spectacle, has been the instrument of deliverance.
31. The itinerary is geographically circuitous: north from Tyre to Sidon, then southeast through the Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee — a long loop through predominantly Gentile territory. This extended journey through Gentile lands follows naturally from the principle that what defiles comes from within, not from external contact. Jesus is enacting the boundary-crossing his teaching authorized.
32. The word *mogilalōn* ('having difficulty speaking, speaking with impediment') appears only here in the New Testament and only once in the Septuagint — in Isaiah 35:6 ('then the tongue of the mute will shout for joy'). Mark's use of this rare word signals that Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah's messianic prophecy. The man's condition — deaf and nearly mute — represents complete communicative isolation.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 35:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. Jesus's healing method here is unusually physical and elaborate. He takes the man aside privately (*kat' idian*) — perhaps because the man cannot hear verbal instructions and needs physical communication. The fingers in the ears and spitting on the tongue are symbolic actions directed at the organs of hearing and speech. Saliva was believed to have healing properties in the ancient world, but Jesus's use of it appears to be a sign-act communicating what he is about to do to a man who cannot hear words.
34. The sigh (*estenaxen*) expresses deep emotion — compassion for the man's suffering, or the burden of confronting a broken world, or the spiritual effort of the healing act. The Aramaic *ephphatha* (from the root p-t-ch, 'to open') is another instance of Mark preserving Jesus's actual spoken words. The translation for Gentile readers — *dianoichthēti* ('be opened, be completely opened') — uses a compound verb intensifying the opening. The single word commands the opening of both ears and mouth.
35. The healing is instant (*eutheōs*, variant of *euthys*). The word *desmos* ('bond, chain, binding') describes the tongue as having been tied or bound — freed from whatever held it. The adverb *orthōs* ('correctly, plainly, clearly') indicates full, normal speech. The language of binding and release connects to the strong-man parable (3:27) — Jesus releases captives from the bonds of affliction.
36. The messianic secret continues, and continues to fail. The comparative construction — 'the more he ordered, the more they proclaimed' (*hoson diesteileto, autoi mallon perisoteron ekērisson*) — creates a paradox: Jesus's commands produce the opposite effect. The verb *ekērysson* ('proclaimed, heralded') is the same word used for public proclamation of the gospel. The people cannot contain their witness.
37. The adverb *hyperperissōs* ('exceedingly, beyond all measure') is one of Mark's strongest intensifiers. The crowd's exclamation 'he has done everything well' (*kalōs panta pepoieken*) echoes Genesis 1:31 ('God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good') and Isaiah 35:5-6 ('then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped'). The people unknowingly declare that Jesus is doing the work of the Creator and fulfilling messianic prophecy in Gentile territory.

37. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 1:31. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
37. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 35:5-6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

8

Summary: *Mark 8 is the pivotal chapter of the Gospel. It begins with a second feeding miracle (four thousand this time), followed by the Pharisees demanding a sign, Jesus warning about the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and Herod, and the disciples' persistent failure to understand. A two-stage healing of a blind man at Bethsaida symbolically mirrors the disciples' gradual (and still incomplete) sight. The chapter reaches its climax at Caesarea Philippi, where Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ — but immediately reveals that he misunderstands what that means. Jesus delivers the first passion prediction and teaches that discipleship requires taking up one's cross.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The two-stage healing of the blind man (vv. 22-26) is unique to Mark and functions as a parable of discipleship: the disciples, like the blind man, see partially but not yet clearly. Peter's confession is the hinge of the entire Gospel — everything before leads to this moment, and everything after redefines what 'Christ' means through the lens of suffering. The first passion prediction (v. 31) introduces the three-fold pattern of death-and-resurrection predictions. The rebuke 'Get behind me, Satan' is among the most dramatic moments in the Gospels.*

Translation Friction: *The relationship between the two feeding miracles is debated — are they doublets of the same event or distinct occasions? Mark's text treats them as separate (8:19-20 distinguishes them), and the differences in numbers, vocabulary, and setting support this. Peter's confession uses 'Christ' (Christos) without further qualification — Mark may intend this as both correct and insufficient.*

Connections: *The feeding of four thousand in Gentile territory parallels the feeding of five thousand in Jewish territory, suggesting Jesus is 'bread' for all peoples. The blindness theme connects to Isaiah 42:18-19 and 35:5. Caesarea Philippi, built by Philip the Tetrarch at the source of the Jordan near a shrine to Pan, provides an ironic backdrop for confessing the true God. The cross-bearing teaching echoes the reality of Roman crucifixion that Mark's audience knew firsthand.*

¹In those days, when there was again a large crowd with nothing to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, ²"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come from a great distance." ⁴His disciples answered him, "How can anyone find enough bread to feed these people here in this desolate place?" ⁵He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." ⁶He directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they set them before the crowd. ⁷They also had a few small fish, and after blessing them, he said that these also should be distributed. ⁸They ate and were satisfied, and they collected seven baskets full of leftover broken pieces. ⁹There were about four thousand people. Then he sent them away. ¹⁰Immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. ¹¹The Pharisees came out and began to argue with him, demanding from him a sign from heaven, to test him. ¹²He sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." ¹³He left them, got back into the boat, and crossed to the other side. ¹⁴They had forgotten to bring bread and had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵He warned them, saying, "Watch out — guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." ¹⁶They began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷Aware of this, he said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Having eyes, do you not see? Having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰"And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said, "Seven." ²¹He said to them, "Do you still not understand?" ²²They

came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. ²³He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. After spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴He looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking around." ²⁵Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and the man looked intently, and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus sent him home, saying, "Do not even go into the village." ²⁷Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸They told him, "John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹Then he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰He sternly ordered them to tell no one about him. ³¹And after three days rise again, he began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed. ³²He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not thinking about the things of God, but the things of human beings." ³⁴He called the crowd together with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone wants to follow me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake and the sake of the good news will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷For what can a person give in exchange for their life? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of them when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *en ekeinai tais hēmerai* ('in those days') is a general temporal marker connecting this to Jesus's extended ministry in Gentile territory (Decapolis, 7:31). The word *palin* ('again') signals a parallel to the first feeding. This time Jesus takes the initiative rather than the disciples.
2. The verb *splanchnizomai* ('I have compassion, my gut is moved') is the same visceral compassion from 1:41 and 6:34. The three days (*hēmerai treis*) indicates the crowd's extraordinary persistence — they have stayed with Jesus for three days in a remote area without adequate food. This detail also foreshadows the 'three days' of the passion predictions.
3. The verb *eklythēsontai* ('will give out, collapse, become faint') describes physical exhaustion from hunger and travel. The note that some came 'from a great distance' (*apo makrothen*) may hint at the Gentile composition of the crowd — they have come from far away, perhaps symbolically representing the nations drawn to Israel's God.
4. The disciples' question is astonishing given that they witnessed the feeding of the five thousand. Their inability to connect that experience to this situation is precisely the 'hardness of heart' Mark identified in 6:52. The word *erēmia* ('wilderness, desolate place') evokes the Exodus feeding narratives. Their question *pothen* ('from where?') echoes Israel's complaint in the wilderness (Numbers 11:13).
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 11:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The number seven may carry symbolic weight — seven often represents completeness or universality in biblical numerology. Some interpreters see the five loaves of the first feeding as representing the five books of Torah (for the Jewish crowd) and seven as representing the completeness of God's provision for all nations (for the Gentile crowd).
6. The verb *eucharistēsas* ('having given thanks') differs from *eulogēsen* ('blessed') used in the first feeding (6:41). Both are standard Jewish meal blessings, but *eucharistēsas* became the technical term for the Lord's Supper (the 'Eucharist'). The same four-action pattern appears: taking, thanking, breaking, giving.
7. The diminutive *ichthydia* ('small fish') and the adjective *oliga* ('few') emphasize the meagreness of the supply. The fish receive their own separate blessing (*eulogēsas*), suggesting a careful, deliberate process. The verb *paratithenai* ('to set before, to serve') places the disciples in the role of servers at a divine banquet.
8. The word *spyridas* ('baskets') differs from the *kophinous* ('wicker baskets') of the first feeding. The *spyris* was a large rope basket, possibly large enough to hold a person (cf. Acts 9:25, where Paul is lowered in a *spyris*). Seven baskets from seven loaves — the surplus matches the initial supply, demonstrating abundance. The readers are meant to compare: twelve baskets from five loaves in the first feeding, seven from seven here.
9. The number four thousand (*tetrakischilioi*) is smaller than the first feeding's five thousand. The word 'about' (*hōs*) indicates an approximation. Jesus dismisses (*apelysen*) the crowd — the same verb used in 6:36 where the disciples wanted to dismiss the first crowd.
10. *Dalmanutha* is mentioned only in Mark and its location is uncertain — Matthew's parallel (15:39) reads 'Magadan' (or 'Magdala'). It was apparently on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The word *euthys* ('immediately') again drives the narrative pace.

11. The verb *syzetein* ('to argue, debate, dispute') indicates hostile engagement. The demand for a *sēmeion apo tou ouranou* ('sign from heaven') means a cosmic, unmistakable divine authentication — something beyond the healings and exorcisms they could attribute to other sources. The participle *peirazontes* ('testing') is the same word used for Satan's testing in 1:13; the Pharisees are aligned with the tempter.
12. The verb *anastenaxas* ('sighed deeply, groaned') is intensified with the prefix *ana-* and describes profound emotional distress. The phrase *ei dothēsetai* ('if a sign will be given') is a Hebrew oath formula — literally 'if [such a thing happens, may God punish me]' — meaning emphatically 'no sign will be given.' Mark's Jesus gives no sign at all; Matthew 12:39 adds 'except the sign of Jonah.' The word *genea* ('generation') implies not just the contemporaries but a type — a faithless generation that demands proof instead of responding in faith.
13. The abrupt departure — *apheis autous* ('leaving them behind') — reflects Jesus's frustration. He does not continue the argument but withdraws. The crossing to 'the other side' (*eis to peran*) continues the pattern of back-and-forth movement across the sea.
14. The detail that they forgot bread is both a narrative setup and deeply ironic — they are with the one who has just twice multiplied bread miraculously and they worry about having only one loaf. The 'one loaf' (*hena arton*) may symbolically refer to Jesus himself, the true bread, though Mark does not make this explicit.
15. *Leaven* (*zymē*) is used metaphorically for a pervasive, corrupting influence — a small amount of yeast transforms an entire batch of dough. The 'leaven of the Pharisees' is their demand for signs and their replacement of God's word with human tradition. The 'leaven of Herod' may refer to political power, worldly ambition, or moral compromise. Mark mentions Herod where Matthew 16:6 has 'Sadducees.' The disciples will completely miss the point.
16. The disciples interpret Jesus's metaphorical warning literally — they think he is talking about actual bread. The verb *dielogizonto* ('were reasoning, deliberating, arguing among themselves') is the same word used for the scribes' hostile reasoning in 2:6, 8. The irony is thick: they worry about bread in the presence of the one who fed thousands.
17. Jesus fires a barrage of questions — five in rapid succession (vv. 17-21) — each one more pointed than the last. The word *pepōrōmenēn* ('hardened, calcified, petrified') for their hearts echoes 6:52 and 3:5 (the Pharisees). Jesus is saying that his own disciples have the same spiritual condition as his opponents. The phrase *oupō* ('not yet') implies an expected progression that has stalled.
18. This echoes Jeremiah 5:21 ('Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear') and Ezekiel 12:2. Jesus places his disciples in the category of those prophetically condemned for spiritual blindness and deafness. The question 'do you not remember?' (*ou mnēmoneuete*) shifts from perception to memory — they have the data but fail to interpret it.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 5:21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 12:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Jesus catechizes the disciples like a teacher testing students. The word *kophinous* ('wicker baskets') is the distinctive basket type from the first feeding. The answer 'twelve' is correct — they remember the facts but miss their significance.
20. The word *spyridōn* ('large baskets') is the distinctive type from the second feeding. Again the disciples answer correctly: seven. The two feedings are explicitly distinguished — five/five thousand/twelve and seven/four thousand/seven — confirming they are separate events.
21. The final question *oupō syniete* ('do you not yet understand?') is left without an answer — the reader is left to supply it. The 'not yet' preserves hope that understanding will come, but the disciples remain blind. This sets the stage for the blind man of Bethsaida (vv. 22-26), whose gradual healing mirrors the disciples' gradual perception.
22. Bethsaida ('house of fishing') was a town at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. The pattern of others bringing the afflicted person to Jesus recurs throughout Mark (cf. 2:3, 7:32). The request to 'touch' (*hapsētai*) the blind man parallels the deaf man's story in 7:32-37. This healing — unique to Mark — is the only miracle in the Gospels that happens in stages.
23. As with the deaf man (7:33), Jesus takes the man aside privately, uses saliva, and lays on hands. The question 'do you see anything?' (*ei ti blepeis*) is extraordinary — Jesus asks about the result of his healing, something he never does elsewhere. The two-stage healing is unique and appears deliberate, not because of any limitation in Jesus's power but to serve a narrative-theological purpose.
24. The man's response describes partial sight — he can see shapes and movement but cannot distinguish people clearly. The comparison of people to trees suggests blurred, indistinct vision. This intermediate stage of sight mirrors the disciples' condition after the feeding miracles: they have some perception but cannot see clearly who Jesus is.
25. Three verbs describe the progression: *dieblpesen* ('he looked through, saw clearly' — a sudden piercing clarity), *apekatestē* ('was restored' — returned to full function), and *eneblepen tēlaugōs hapanta* ('was seeing everything at a distance clearly'). The adverb *tēlaugōs* ('clearly, distinctly, far-shiningly') indicates not just restoration but enhanced vision. The two-stage healing enacts what will happen to the disciples: Peter's confession (v. 29) is partial sight; full vision awaits the resurrection.
26. The command to avoid the village continues the messianic secret — the healing is not to be publicized. The SBLGNT has the shorter reading 'do not even go into the village' (*mēde eis tēn kōmēn eiselhēs*) without the additional prohibition about telling anyone, which appears in later manuscripts.

- 27.** Caesarea Philippi (modern Banias) was located at the northern extreme of Jewish territory, near the sources of the Jordan River, at the foot of Mount Hermon. Philip the Tetrarch had rebuilt it and named it after Caesar and himself. The region was marked by pagan shrines, including a grotto dedicated to Pan. Against this backdrop of pagan worship, Jesus asks the central question of the Gospel. The phrase *en tē hodō* ('on the way') makes this a traveling conversation — the 'way' becomes a metaphor for discipleship in Mark.
- 28.** These are the same three categories from 6:14-15 — resurrected John, returned Elijah, or a new prophet. All three recognize Jesus as a prophetic figure but none identifies him as the Messiah. Public opinion sees Jesus through the categories of the past rather than as something new.
- 29.** The emphatic *hymeis de* ('but you') contrasts the disciples' answer with popular opinion. Peter speaks as the group's representative. His confession — *sy ei ho Christos* ('you are the Christ/Messiah') — is the correct answer to the question posed in 1:1. Mark's version is unadorned — no 'Son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16), no commendation. The confession is right but, as the next verses will show, Peter's understanding of what 'Christ' means is dangerously wrong.
- 30.** The verb *epetimēsen* ('sternly warned, rebuked') is the same word used for rebuking demons (1:25) and the wind (4:39). The intensity suggests that premature proclamation of a misunderstood messiahship would be dangerous. Before anyone can proclaim Jesus as Christ, they must learn that the Christ must suffer — the teaching that follows immediately.
- 31.** This is the first of three passion predictions (cf. 9:31, 10:33-34), each more detailed than the last. The word *dei* ('it is necessary, must') indicates divine necessity — this is not mere prediction but theological imperative. The title 'Son of Man' replaces 'Christ,' redefining messiahship through Daniel 7's suffering and vindicated figure. The three groups — elders, chief priests, and scribes — constitute the Sanhedrin, Israel's supreme council. The phrase *meta treis hēmeras* ('after three days') is Mark's way of expressing what other Gospels call 'on the third day.'
- 31.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 32.** The word *parrēsia* ('openly, plainly, boldly, without concealment') contrasts with the messianic secrecy — for the first time, Jesus speaks directly about his fate rather than in parables. The verb *proslabomenos* ('taking aside, drawing to himself') and *epitiman* ('to rebuke') are astonishing: Peter presumes to correct Jesus, using the same verb (*epitimaō*) that Jesus uses against demons. The one who just confessed Jesus as Christ now opposes Christ's self-defined mission.
- 33.** Jesus turns to face the disciples — the rebuke is public, not private, because the temptation Peter represents threatens the entire group. Calling Peter 'Satan' (*Satana*) identifies Peter's opposition to suffering as the same temptation Jesus faced in the wilderness (1:13). The verb *phroneis* ('think, set your mind on, have a mindset toward') goes deeper than a single thought — it describes an entire orientation. Peter's mind is set on human values (power, victory, avoidance of suffering) rather than God's purposes (redemption through suffering).
- 34.** Jesus expands the audience from the Twelve to the crowd — this teaching is for all, not just apostles. Three imperatives define discipleship: *aparnēsasthō heauton* ('let them deny themselves' — renounce self as the center of life), *aratō ton stauron autou* ('let them take up their cross' — accept the possibility of execution), and *akoloutheitō moi* ('let them follow me' — walk the same path). For Mark's Roman audience, 'taking up a cross' was not a metaphor — they had seen crucifixion victims carrying their crossbeams through the streets.
- 35.** The word *psychē* means both 'life' (physical existence) and 'soul/self' (deeper identity). The paradox works on both levels: clinging to physical safety leads to spiritual loss; risking physical life for Jesus leads to ultimate salvation. The phrase *heneken emou kai tou euangeliou* ('for my sake and the gospel's') uniquely yokes Jesus's person to the message — the two are inseparable.
- 36.** The commercial language — *ōphelei* ('profit, benefit'), *kerdēsai* ('gain'), *zēmiōthēnai* ('suffer loss, forfeit') — frames the question in terms of a cosmic cost-benefit analysis. The 'whole world' (*ton kosmon holon*) is the maximum possible gain; one's *psychē* is what is at stake. No amount of worldly acquisition can compensate for the loss of one's true self.
- 37.** The word *antallagma* ('exchange, ransom price, equivalent') comes from commercial vocabulary — what could possibly serve as a buyback price for a forfeited soul? The implied answer: nothing. Once the *psychē* is lost, no transaction can recover it. This echoes Psalm 49:7-9 ('no one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them').
- 37.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 49:7-9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 38.** The verb *epaischynthē* ('is ashamed') describes the social pressure to distance oneself from Jesus — a very real temptation for Mark's audience facing persecution in Rome. The present generation is called *moichalidi* ('adulterous') — using the Old Testament prophetic image of Israel as an unfaithful spouse (Hosea 1-3). The Son of Man's future coming 'in the glory of his Father with the holy angels' draws on Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man receives glory and dominion. The one who suffers now will be vindicated then.
- 38.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Hosea 1-3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 38.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 7:13-14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

9

Summary: *Mark 9 moves from the Transfiguration on the mountain — where Jesus is revealed in divine glory alongside Moses and Elijah — to the valley below, where a desperate father brings his demon-possessed son to disciples who cannot heal him. Jesus delivers the boy and offers the second passion prediction. The chapter continues with teachings on true greatness (the least is the greatest), radical inclusion ('whoever is not against us is for us'), and radical self-discipline (the 'cutting off' sayings about sin). The chapter's arc moves from heavenly glory to earthly failure to ethical demand.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Transfiguration is the only episode in Mark where Jesus's divine identity is openly displayed before the resurrection. The voice from the cloud — 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him' — repeats the baptismal declaration (1:11) but now addresses the disciples directly. The failed exorcism below the mountain (vv. 14-29) creates a dramatic contrast between the glory above and the struggle below. The father's cry — 'I believe; help my unbelief!' (v. 24) — is one of the most honest prayers in Scripture.*

Translation Friction: *The saying 'this kind cannot come out except by prayer' (v. 29) raises questions about exorcism methodology. Some manuscripts add 'and fasting,' but the SBLGNT omits it. The 'salt' sayings at the end of the chapter (vv. 49-50) are notoriously difficult to interpret, and their connection to the preceding material is unclear. We render the Greek as given and address the interpretive challenges in the notes.*

Connections: *The Transfiguration echoes Moses on Sinai (Exodus 24, 34) — the mountain, the cloud, the voice, the shining appearance, the six days. Elijah's presence connects to Malachi 4:5-6 and the expected return of Elijah before the Day of the Lord. The second passion prediction (v. 31) advances the trajectory toward Jerusalem. The teaching on greatness (vv. 33-37) inverts all conventional honor systems and anticipates Jesus's own self-offering.*

¹And he said to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God having come in power." ²After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves, alone. And he was transfigured before them, ³His raiment became gleaming, exceeding brilliant as snow. So as no fuller on earth can white them. ⁴And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters — one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶For he did not know what to say, because they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud came, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son — listen to him." ⁸Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus alone. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this "rising from the dead" meant. ¹¹And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹²He said to them, "Elijah does come first and restores all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written about him." ¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a great crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵Immediately the whole crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran to greet him. ¹⁶He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" ¹⁷Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." ¹⁹He answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰They brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell on the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He said, "From childhood. ²²It has often thrown him into fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." ²³Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for the one who believes." ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I

believe — help my unbelief!" ²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶After crying out and convulsing him violently, it came out. The boy became like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up, and he stood. ²⁸After he had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything except prayer." ³⁰They went out from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know, ³¹Since he taught his followers, and stated to them, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, then they will kill him. And following that he is killed, he will rise the third day. ³²But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him. ³³They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶Taking a child, he set him in the middle of them. Then taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives not me but the one who sent me." ³⁸John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us." ³⁹But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. ⁴²"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, ⁴⁸Where their decay dieth not, and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁹For every one will be refined by fire. ⁵⁰Salt is good, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This saying is linked to 8:38 and serves as a transition to the Transfiguration. The phrase 'taste death' (geusōntai thanatou) is a Semitic idiom meaning 'experience death.' The perfect participle elēlythūian ('having come') indicates a completed arrival, not a gradual process. The referent — what 'seeing the kingdom come in power' means — is debated: the Transfiguration, the resurrection, Pentecost, or the destruction of Jerusalem have all been proposed.
2. The 'six days' may echo Exodus 24:16, where the cloud covered Sinai for six days before God spoke to Moses on the seventh. Peter, James, and John form Jesus's inner circle (cf. 5:37, 14:33). The verb metamorphōthē ('was transfigured, was transformed') indicates a change of form (morphē), not merely appearance — the same root Paul uses in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 24:16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. Mark's description is earthy and vivid — he compares the supernatural brilliance to a launderer's best work and declares it surpassed. The word gnaphēus ('fuller, launderer, cloth-bleacher') is a working-class trade term. The whiteness signals heavenly origin (cf. Daniel 7:9, where the Ancient of Days wears white garments).
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 7:9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. Mark names Elijah first (Matthew and Luke name Moses first), perhaps reflecting Mark's sustained interest in the Elijah-John the Baptist connection. Moses represents the Law, Elijah the Prophets — the entire Old Testament bears witness to Jesus. The content of their conversation is not recorded in Mark (Luke 9:31 says they discussed Jesus's 'departure' in Jerusalem).
5. Peter addresses Jesus as 'Rabbi' (teacher) — a title that seems inadequate given what he is witnessing. The proposal to build three skēnas ('tents, shelters, tabernacles') may reflect the Feast of Tabernacles, when Israel dwelt in booths commemorating the wilderness wandering. Peter's impulse is to prolong the mountaintop experience and to place Jesus on an equal footing with Moses and Elijah — both errors the divine voice will correct.
6. Mark's candid editorial comment explains Peter's remark: he spoke from terror (ekphoboi, 'terrified, struck with fear'), not from understanding. This is a theophanic response — the fear that grips humans in the presence of the divine (cf. Exodus 3:6, Isaiah 6:5).

6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 3:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 6:5. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The cloud (*nephelē*) is the *shekinah* — the glory-cloud of God's presence that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). The voice from the cloud repeats the baptismal declaration (1:11) with a crucial change: 'This is my Son' (third person, addressed to the disciples) replaces 'You are my Son' (second person, addressed to Jesus). The command 'listen to him' (*akouete autou*) echoes Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses promises a prophet like himself whom the people must obey.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 40:34-35. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 1 Kings 8:10-11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 18:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The vision ends abruptly. Moses and Elijah have vanished; only Jesus remains. The theological point is clear: the Law and the Prophets have given way to Jesus. He alone is the one to whom they must listen.
9. The messianic secret here has an explicit time limit: silence until the resurrection. This is the clearest indication that the secrecy is temporary and pedagogical — the Transfiguration cannot be properly understood until after the cross and resurrection provide the interpretive framework.
10. The disciples obeyed the command to silence but were puzzled by the phrase 'rising from the dead.' While Jews believed in a general resurrection at the end of the age (cf. Daniel 12:2), the idea of a single individual rising before the general resurrection was unprecedented.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 12:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The appearance of Elijah on the mountain prompted the question. The scribal teaching was based on Malachi 4:5-6: 'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD.' If Elijah must come first to restore all things, why is the Son of Man speaking of suffering?
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Malachi 4:5-6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. Jesus affirms the Elijah tradition but adds a counter-question: if Scripture speaks of Elijah's restoration, it also speaks of the Son of Man's suffering. The verb *exoudenēthē* ('treated with contempt, despised, counted as nothing') echoes Isaiah 53:3 and Psalm 22:6.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 53:3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 22:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The reference is to John the Baptist, whose execution by Herod was narrated in 6:14-29. The pattern Jesus establishes is clear: Elijah came and was mistreated; the Son of Man will come and be mistreated. The phrase 'as it is written about him' is difficult — no Old Testament text explicitly describes Elijah being mistreated, though 1 Kings 19:2 and 19:10 recount threats against his life.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 19:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The descent from the mountain of glory to a scene of confusion and controversy mirrors Moses's descent from Sinai to find Israel's golden calf apostasy (Exodus 32). The nine disciples left behind are overwhelmed.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 32. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The crowd's amazement (*exethambēthēsan*) at seeing Jesus may suggest that some residual glory from the Transfiguration lingered on his face, as with Moses in Exodus 34:29-30, though Mark does not make this explicit.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 34:29-30 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. Jesus addresses either the crowd or the scribes (the pronoun is ambiguous), asking about the dispute with the disciples.
17. The father addresses Jesus as 'Teacher' (*Didaskale*). The spirit is called *alalon* ('mute, speechless') — it has robbed the boy of speech. The description that follows (v. 18) also suggests seizure activity, leading many to identify epilepsy as the physical manifestation of the spiritual affliction.
18. The symptoms described — seizures, foaming, teeth-grinding, rigidity (*xērainetai*, literally 'dries up, withers, becomes stiff') — are consistent with severe epileptic episodes. The disciples' inability to cast out this spirit sets up the teaching in verse 29 about prayer.

19. Jesus's exasperation echoes Moses's frustration with Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 14:27, Deuteronomy 32:5, 20). The address 'faithless generation' (*genea apistos*) encompasses not just the disciples but the entire unbelieving context. The double question — 'how long... how long...' — expresses both impatience and poignant awareness of limited time.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 14:27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 32:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The spirit reacts violently to Jesus's presence — a pattern in Mark's exorcism accounts (1:26, 5:6-7). The verb *synesparaxen* ('convulsed violently, tore') describes the physical violence of the seizure. The scene is raw and distressing.
21. Jesus's question is not for information-gathering (as if he needed it) but to draw out the father's faith and to reveal the depth of the suffering. The answer 'from childhood' (*ek paidiothen*) indicates years of torment.
22. The spirit is actively trying to kill the boy — the fires and waters are not accidental but purposeful attempts at destruction. The father's 'if you can' (*ei ti dynē*) reveals honest doubt after the disciples' failure. His plea is for 'us' (*hēmas*), not just the boy — the whole family suffers.
23. Jesus throws the father's words back at him with the quotation 'If you can!' (*to Ei dynē*) — the issue is not Jesus's ability but the father's faith. The declaration 'all things are possible for the one who believes' (*panta dynata tō pisteuonti*) locates the power in faith's connection to God, not in faith as a psychological force.
24. This is one of the most psychologically honest prayers in Scripture. The father simultaneously affirms faith and confesses its inadequacy. He does not pretend to more faith than he has, nor does he surrender to doubt. The paradox — believing and unbelieving at once — captures the human condition before God. The SBLGNT does not include 'with tears' (*meta dakryōn*), found in some manuscripts.
25. Jesus acts quickly before the crowd grows larger — consistent with his pattern of avoiding public spectacle. The emphatic pronoun *egō* ('I myself') asserts personal authority over the spirit. The command 'never enter him again' (*mēketi eiselhēs eis auton*) goes beyond exorcism to permanent prohibition, ensuring the boy's lasting freedom.
26. The departure of the spirit is violent — a final act of destruction on the way out. The boy's apparent death creates a narrative of resurrection: he appears dead, then Jesus raises him. This prefigures Jesus's own death and resurrection.
27. The verb *egeiren* ('raised up') is the same word used for resurrection throughout the New Testament. The boy's raising prefigures the ultimate raising that Jesus has been predicting. The physical touch — taking the hand — echoes the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:41).
28. The private setting (*kat' idian*, 'privately') continues Mark's pattern of public ministry followed by private instruction. The disciples' question reveals their awareness of having received authority over unclean spirits (6:7) and their confusion at its failure.
29. The SBLGNT reads only 'prayer' (*proseuchē*) without 'and fasting' (*kai nēsteia*), which appears in later manuscripts. The point is that the disciples relied on their delegated authority as a technique rather than maintaining dependence on God through prayer. The word *genos* ('kind, type, class') suggests categories of spiritual opposition with varying degrees of resistance.
30. The desire for secrecy here serves the need for focused teaching: Jesus is preparing the disciples for what lies ahead in Jerusalem, and public ministry would be a distraction.
31. The second passion prediction is more concise than the first (8:31) but adds the detail of being 'delivered into the hands of men' (*paradidotai eis cheiras anthrōpōn*). The present tense *paradidotai* ('is being delivered') suggests the betrayal is already in process. The wordplay between 'Son of Man' (*huios tou anthrōpou*) and 'hands of men' (*cheiras anthrōpōn*) is deliberate — the Human One is handed over to humans.
32. After Peter's rebuke in 8:33, the disciples are now afraid to question Jesus about his passion predictions. The verb *ēgnōoun* ('they did not understand') is the imperfect of *agnōō* ('to be ignorant, to not comprehend') — their incomprehension was ongoing.
33. Capernaum was Jesus's base of operations in Galilee (cf. 1:21, 2:1). 'The house' (*tē oikia*) likely refers to Peter's house, used as a regular meeting place. Jesus's question draws out a confession the disciples are embarrassed to make.
34. Their silence reveals their shame. The irony is brutal: Jesus has just predicted his death, and the disciples are competing for rank. The question 'who is greatest' (*tis meizōn*) exposes the distance between Jesus's understanding of messiahship and theirs.
35. Sitting down (*kathisas*) is the posture of an authoritative teacher. The reversal is total: the one who wants to be first (*prōtos*) must become last (*eschatos*) and servant (*diakonos*). The word *diakonos* ('servant, one who serves at table') is not the word for slave (*doulos*) but for voluntary service — though Jesus will use *doulos* in 10:44.
36. The physical gesture — embracing the child (*enagkalisamenos*, 'having taken in his arms') — is tender and deliberate. In the ancient world, children had no social standing and were valued primarily as future adults. Jesus places a person of zero social status at the center of the community.
37. The chain of identification — child to Jesus to God — inverts the honor scale. To receive (*dexētai*, 'welcome, accept') the lowest is to receive the highest. The phrase 'in my name' (*epi tō onomati mou*) means 'for my sake, as my representative, on the basis of my authority.'
38. John's report introduces a question about boundaries: who has the right to act in Jesus's name? The disciples assumed that only those in their group had authority. The imperfect *ekōlyomen* ('we were trying to stop him') suggests repeated attempts.

39. Jesus's response is strikingly generous: effective use of his name is self-authenticating. The word *dynamis* ('mighty work, miracle, act of power') refers to the exorcism. The logic is practical: someone who experiences divine power through Jesus's name is unlikely to turn against him.
40. This principle of inclusion contrasts with the exclusionary version in Matthew 12:30 ('whoever is not with me is against me'). The two sayings address different situations: Matthew 12:30 confronts neutrality in the face of spiritual warfare; Mark 9:40 addresses overzealous boundary-drawing by the disciples.
41. The example descends to the smallest possible act of kindness — a cup of water. Even this minimal gesture, if motivated by allegiance to Christ, carries eternal significance. The phrase 'because you belong to Christ' (*hoti Christou este*) uses the genitive of possession.
42. The verb *skandalisē* ('cause to stumble, cause to fall into sin') gives us the English 'scandalize.' The 'little ones' (*mikrōn*) extends beyond children to include all vulnerable believers. The *mylos onikos* ('donkey-millstone') is the large upper millstone turned by a donkey, as opposed to the small hand-mill — a weight ensuring drowning. The image is deliberately extreme to convey the severity of leading others astray.
43. The hyperbolic language demands radical action against sin, not literal self-mutilation. 'Gehenna' (*geenna*) refers to the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, where child sacrifices were once offered (2 Kings 23:10) and which became a symbol of divine judgment. 'Unquenchable fire' (to *pyr* to *asbeston*) draws on Isaiah 66:24.
43. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Kings 23:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
43. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 66:24 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
44. Verse 44 is absent from the earliest and best manuscripts of Mark and is not included in the SBLGNT critical text. It duplicates verse 48 and was likely added by scribes for symmetry. We follow the SBLGNT in omitting it while retaining the verse number for reference.
45. The pattern continues: hand, foot, eye — each body part represents a different avenue of sin (actions, paths taken, desires). The contrast between entering 'life' (*zōē*, eternal life with God) and being thrown into 'Gehenna' (judgment) frames existence as a binary choice.
46. Verse 46, like verse 44, is absent from the SBLGNT critical text and was likely added by scribes to create a refrain after each body-part saying. We follow the critical text in omitting it.
47. The final member of the triad uses 'kingdom of God' (*basileia tou theou*) where the previous two used 'life' (*zōē*), confirming that the two expressions are synonymous in this context. The eye represents desire and covetousness (cf. 7:22, 'evil eye').
48. Jesus quotes Isaiah 66:24, the final verse of Isaiah, which describes the fate of those who rebelled against God. The 'worm' (*skōlēx*) and 'fire' represent ongoing destruction. Whether this imagery describes eternal conscious torment or complete destruction has been debated throughout Christian history; the Greek text states the permanence of the agents of destruction.
48. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 66:24 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
49. This is one of the most cryptic sayings in the Gospels. The connection between salt and fire may relate to the purifying function of both (Leviticus 2:13 required salt on every grain offering; fire tests and refines, cf. Malachi 3:2-3). The saying may mean that all disciples will undergo the refining fire of persecution and testing.
49. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 2:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
49. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Malachi 3:2-3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
50. The chapter ends with a proverbial cluster around salt. Salt that becomes *analon* ('unsalty, tasteless') is worthless — a metaphor for discipleship that loses its distinctive character. The final command — 'be at peace with one another' (*eirēneute en allēlois*) — returns to the dispute about greatness that opened this section (v. 34). The salt sayings bind together purification (v. 49), distinctiveness, and communal harmony.

10

Summary: Mark 10 records Jesus's journey from Galilee toward Jerusalem through the region beyond the Jordan. The chapter addresses marriage and divorce, the blessing of children, the encounter with a rich man who cannot part with his possessions, the third and most detailed passion prediction, the request of James and John for positions of honor, and the healing of blind Bartimaeus at Jericho. Each episode deepens the contrast between worldly values and kingdom values as Jesus moves steadily toward the cross.

What Makes This Remarkable: *The rich man's encounter (vv. 17-27) contains Jesus's most direct teaching on wealth and the kingdom of God. The image of a camel passing through the eye of a needle is deliberately absurd — it is not softened by any appeal to narrow gates or rope-for-camel theories. The third passion prediction (vv. 33-34) is the most specific, naming the Gentiles and detailing mocking, spitting, flogging, and killing. Bartimaeus's healing (vv. 46-52) closes the journey section by restoring the sight that the disciples still lack — and Bartimaeus, unlike the healed blind man of 8:22-26, follows Jesus 'on the way' to Jerusalem.*

Translation Friction: *Jesus's teaching on divorce (vv. 2-12) has been interpreted variously across Christian traditions. We render the Greek as given: Jesus distinguishes between Moses's concession (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) and God's original intent (Genesis 1:27, 2:24). The 'exception clause' found in Matthew 19:9 is absent from Mark. The phrase 'for your hardness of heart' (pros tēn sklērokardian hymōn) is translated directly.*

Connections: *The divorce teaching connects to Genesis 1-2 (creation of male and female) and Deuteronomy 24 (certificate of divorce). The rich man episode echoes the Decalogue (Exodus 20:12-17). The third passion prediction fulfills Isaiah 50:6 (spitting and striking) and Isaiah 53 (the Suffering Servant). The 'ransom for many' saying (v. 45) is one of the clearest atonement statements in Mark, echoing Isaiah 53:10-12. Bartimaeus's cry 'Son of David' is the first public messianic acclamation in Mark.*

1He got up and went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered around him again, and as was his custom, he taught them again. 2Pharisees came up and, to test him, asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" 4They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6But from the start of creation God created them as male and female. 7For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8Indeed, they twain will be one flesh — so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 10In the house, the disciples asked him again about this. 11He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." 13People were bringing children to him so that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14When Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me — do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." 16And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. 17As he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20He said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22Disheartened by the word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25Than for a rich man to enter into god's kingdom, and it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. 26They were exceedingly astonished and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." 28Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the gospel's, 30Yet he will accept an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers and sisters, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions. And in the world to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last first." 32They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. They were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Taking the twelve aside again, he began to tell them what was about to happen to him: 33"Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the

Gentiles. ³⁴They will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. And after three days he will rise." ³⁵James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷They said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹They said to him, "We are able." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. ⁴⁰But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹When the ten heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴Indeed, whosoever of you will be the chiefest, will be servant of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." ⁴⁶They came to Jericho. As he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." They called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart! Get up, he is calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "Rabboni, let me recover my sight." ⁵²Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has made you well." Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The geographical notice marks the shift from Galilee to Judea — Jesus is now on the road to Jerusalem. The route 'beyond the Jordan' (peran tou Iordanou) describes the Transjordan route through Perea, avoiding Samaria. The phrase 'as was his custom' (hōs eiōthei) reminds the reader that teaching was Jesus's primary activity.
2. The participle peirazontes ('testing') signals hostile intent, not genuine inquiry. The question about the legality (exestin, 'is it permitted') of divorce was debated among the rabbis — the school of Shammai allowed it only for sexual immorality, the school of Hillel for almost any cause. The question was designed to trap Jesus in a controversial position.
3. Jesus redirects the question to Scripture itself. His use of 'command' (eneteilato) rather than 'permit' is significant — he will soon distinguish between what Moses commanded and what Moses merely permitted.
4. The Pharisees answer with Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which assumes the practice of divorce and regulates it. They use the word epetrepsen ('permitted, allowed'), acknowledging this was a concession rather than a positive command. The 'certificate of divorce' (biblion apostasiou) was a legal document protecting the woman's right to remarry.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 24:1-4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The compound noun sklērōkardian ('hardness of heart') combines sklēros ('hard, stiff') and kardia ('heart'). The Mosaic divorce provision is characterized as an accommodation to human fallenness, not an expression of God's ideal. Jesus frames the Deuteronomy passage as a concession, not a norm.
6. Jesus goes behind Moses to Genesis 1:27, treating the creation narrative as the foundational expression of God's will for humanity. The appeal to 'the beginning of creation' (archēs ktiseōs) establishes creation order as the standard against which the Mosaic concession is measured.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Jesus continues quoting, now from Genesis 2:24. The verb kataleipsei ('will leave, will forsake') indicates a fundamental reorientation of primary loyalty — from birth family to marriage covenant. Some SBLGNT manuscripts include 'and be joined to his wife' (kai proskollēthēsetai pros tēn gynaika autou) while others do not.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 2:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The quotation from Genesis 2:24 concludes, and Jesus draws the inference: if marriage creates a unity ('one flesh,' mia sarx), then divorce is not merely a legal action but a tearing apart of what has been joined. The phrase 'one flesh' encompasses the totality of the shared life — physical, emotional, economic, and spiritual.

8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 2:24 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The verb *synezeyxen* ('joined together, yoked together') comes from the world of harnessing animals — two made into a working pair. The prohibition 'let no one separate' (*anthrōpos mē chōrizetō*) uses the present imperative, forbidding an ongoing practice. The shift from 'Moses permitted' to 'God joined' reframes the entire discussion from legal permission to divine intention.
10. Mark's pattern of public teaching followed by private explanation continues (cf. 4:10, 7:17). The disciples need further clarification about the divorce teaching.
11. The phrase 'against her' (*ep' autēn*) is significant — in Jewish law, a man could commit adultery against another man (by violating his marriage) but not against his own wife. Jesus's statement grants the wife equal standing as the wronged party, a radical elevation of women's status in marriage.
12. This verse addresses a woman initiating divorce — possible under Roman and some Hellenistic Jewish law but not standard in Palestinian Judaism. Mark's inclusion reflects his Roman audience. The symmetry of the teaching (both husband and wife are held to the same standard) is remarkable for the ancient world.
13. The verb *epetimēsan* ('rebuked') is the strong word used for commanding demons — the disciples treat the children's approach as an intrusion. In a society where children had no social standing, the disciples' action reflects conventional values. Jesus will overturn those values.
14. The verb *ēganaktēsen* ('was indignant, was angry') is one of the few places Mark records Jesus's anger directed at his own disciples. The statement that the kingdom 'belongs to such as these' (*tōn toioutōn estin hē basileia tou theou*) does not idealize childhood innocence but identifies the child's position — dependent, without status, unable to earn — as the posture required for receiving the kingdom.
15. The double negative *ou mē* ('by no means, never') is the strongest negation in Greek. Receiving the kingdom 'like a child' (*hōs paidion*) means receiving it as a gift, without pretension, without credentials, in total dependence — the opposite of earning or deserving it.
16. The verb *kateulegei* ('blessed fervently, blessed abundantly') is an intensified form — Mark emphasizes the warmth of Jesus's response. The physical gesture of taking children in his arms (*enagkalisamenos*) repeats the action of 9:36. Jesus does not merely permit the children's approach; he embraces and blesses them.
17. The man's urgency (running, kneeling) and respectful address ('Good Teacher') suggest genuine sincerity. The question frames eternal life as something to be 'inherited' (*klēronomēsō*) — received as a family right — yet also asks 'what must I do,' revealing a works-based framework. Mark does not call him 'young' (that is Matthew's addition) or 'ruler' (that is Luke's).
18. Jesus's response is not a denial of his own goodness but a challenge to the man's casual use of the word. If 'good' belongs properly to God alone, then calling Jesus 'good' either means nothing or means everything. The statement forces the man to reckon with who Jesus is.
19. Jesus cites the second table of the Decalogue (commandments governing human relationships). Notably absent is 'You shall not covet' — replaced by 'Do not defraud' (*mē apostērēsēs*), which may be a practical application of the covetousness prohibition, particularly relevant to a wealthy person. The first table (love of God) is not mentioned but will be implied by the demand in verse 21.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 20:12-16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The verb *ephyllaxamēn* ('I have guarded, kept, observed') indicates careful compliance. The claim is not dismissed by Jesus — he takes it at face value. 'From my youth' (*ek neotētos mou*) means from the age of accountability (approximately twelve or thirteen in Jewish practice).
21. The detail 'loved him' (*ēgapēsen auton*) is unique to Mark and is striking — Jesus's demand is motivated by love, not hostility. The verb *emblepsas* ('looking intently at') suggests a penetrating gaze. The 'one thing' (*hen*) is not merely divestiture but the total reorientation it represents: allegiance to Jesus over wealth. The SBLGNT does not include 'take up the cross' (*aras ton stauron*), found in some manuscripts.
22. The verb *stygynasas* ('became gloomy, was shocked, was appalled') describes a visible darkening of the face — the opposite of the eager approach in verse 17. The man's grief (*lypoumenos*) is genuine; he is not indifferent but cannot bring himself to act. He is the only person in the Gospels who comes to Jesus with a sincere question and leaves without following.
23. The adverb *dyskolōs* ('with difficulty, hardly') sets up the astonishment that follows. Jesus does not say it is impossible, but 'how difficult' (*pōs dyskolōs*) — the difficulty is stressed, not absolute impossibility.
24. The disciples' amazement (*ethambounto*) reveals their assumption that wealth was a sign of divine blessing. The address 'Children' (*Tekna*) is tender — Jesus softens his teaching with familial affection. The SBLGNT reads simply 'how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God' without the qualification 'for those who trust in riches' found in some manuscripts.
25. The image is deliberately impossible — a camel (*kamēlon*) through the eye of a sewing needle (*trymalia raphidos*). Attempts to soften this (a 'rope' instead of a camel, or a small gate called 'the Needle's Eye') have no textual or archaeological support. Jesus uses comic hyperbole to make a serious point: wealth creates an attachment that is humanly impossible to overcome.
26. The disciples' question reveals their logic: if even the wealthy (assumed to be divinely blessed) cannot enter the kingdom, then salvation is impossible for anyone. This is exactly the conclusion Jesus wants them to reach — so that verse 27 can redirect them to God's power.

27. The statement echoes Genesis 18:14 ('Is anything too hard for the LORD?') and Job 42:2 ('I know that you can do all things'). Salvation is not a human achievement but a divine gift. The word *adynaton* ('impossible') is unqualified — Jesus does not say 'difficult' but 'impossible' for humans, possible only for God.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 18:14. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Job 42:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. Peter's statement is both a contrast to the rich man (who would not leave his possessions) and an implicit question: 'What will we get?' The verb *aphēkamen* ('we have left, abandoned') is the same word used for the rich man's failure — the disciples did what he could not.
29. The list of what may be left covers the entire social world: home, family, and livelihood. The phrase 'for my sake and for the gospel's' (*heneken emou kai heneken tou euangeliou*) links personal loyalty to Jesus with commitment to the mission of proclamation.
30. The promise of a hundredfold return is remarkable, but the parenthetical 'with persecutions' (*meta diōgmōn*) prevents any prosperity-gospel reading. The new community of faith provides the extended family, but that community exists under the cross. Note that 'fathers' are absent from the return list — there is only one Father in the new community. The two-age framework ('this present age' and 'the age to come') reflects Jewish eschatology.
31. This reversal saying (cf. 9:35) provides the hermeneutical key: the kingdom of God inverts every human hierarchy. The rich man who seemed 'first' ends up unable to enter; the disciples who left everything are promised abundance.
32. The scene is vivid: Jesus strides ahead toward Jerusalem with grim determination while the disciples follow in a mixture of amazement and fear. The verb *proagōn* ('going before, leading the way') shows Jesus actively leading toward his death, not being swept along by events. 'Going up' (*anabainontes*) is both geographical (Jerusalem sits at elevation) and theological (ascending to the place of sacrifice).
33. The third passion prediction (cf. 8:31, 9:31) is the most detailed, adding the condemnation by the Sanhedrin and the delivery to the Gentiles (the Romans). The verb *paradothēsetai* ('will be delivered over, betrayed') is used twice — first of the Jewish leaders handing Jesus to the Romans, then of the betrayal itself. The passive may imply divine agency: God is delivering the Son of Man into human hands.
34. The specificity is remarkable: mocking, spitting, flogging — each fulfilled in the passion narrative (14:65, 15:15-20). The verb *mastigōsoun* ('they will flog') refers to the Roman flagellum, a whip with embedded bone or metal. The prediction ends, as always, with resurrection — the suffering is not the last word.
35. The brazenness of the request — a blank check ('whatever we ask') — is remarkable coming immediately after the most detailed passion prediction. In Matthew's account (20:20), their mother makes the request; Mark attributes it directly to James and John.
36. Jesus asks the same question he will ask blind Bartimaeus in verse 51. The contrast is telling: James and John ask for thrones; Bartimaeus asks for sight.
37. The right and left positions are seats of highest honor, sharing the ruler's authority. The phrase 'in your glory' (*en tē doxē sou*) shows they believe in Jesus's coming triumph — they simply want the best seats. The irony is that the positions at Jesus's right and left in his 'glory' will be occupied by two crucified criminals (15:27).
38. The 'cup' (*potērion*) is a biblical metaphor for one's allotted portion, often God's wrath (Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15). The 'baptism' (*baptisma*) metaphor extends the image — being submerged in suffering. Jesus uses the present tense ('I drink,' 'I am baptized'), indicating that his suffering is already underway.
38. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 75:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
38. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 51:17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
38. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 25:15 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
39. Their confident 'We are able' (*Dynametha*) is brave but uninformed. Jesus affirms they will indeed share his suffering — James was the first apostle martyred (Acts 12:2), and John, according to tradition, endured exile. Sharing Jesus's suffering, however, does not guarantee sharing his throne.
40. Jesus distinguishes between what he can promise (shared suffering) and what belongs to the Father's sovereignty (positions of honor). The passive *hētoimastai* ('it has been prepared') is a divine passive — God is the unnamed agent who determines positions in the kingdom.
41. The indignation (*aganaktein*) of the other ten is not righteous — it stems from the same desire for status. They are angry not because the request was inappropriate but because James and John tried to get there first.
42. The verbs *katakuriēousin* ('lord it over, dominate') and *katexousiazousin* ('exercise authority over, tyrannize') both have the prefix *kata-* ('down upon'), emphasizing the downward pressure of coercive power. The phrase 'those considered rulers' (*hoi dokountes archein*) is subtly ironic — they merely 'seem' to rule; true authority lies elsewhere.

43. The contrast is absolute: 'not so among you' (ouch houtōs en hymin). The kingdom community operates on an entirely different power structure. The word diakonos ('servant, attendant') describes one who serves others' needs.
44. Jesus escalates from diakonos ('servant') in verse 43 to doulos ('slave') here. A doulos had no rights, no status, no self-determination. This is the most radical statement of servant leadership in the Gospels — the one who would be 'first' (prōtos) must become a slave (doulos) to 'all' (pantōn).
45. This is Mark's clearest atonement statement. The word lytron ('ransom') is the price paid to liberate a slave or prisoner of war. The preposition anti ('in place of, instead of, in exchange for') indicates substitution. 'For many' (anti pollōn) echoes Isaiah 53:11-12, where the Servant bears the sins of 'the many.' Jesus grounds the call to service in his own example — the Son of Man's ultimate service is sacrificial death.
45. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 53:11-12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
46. Bartimaeus is one of the few people healed by Jesus whose name Mark preserves (cf. Jairus, 5:22), suggesting he was known to Mark's community. The name Bar-Timaios is Aramaic for 'son of Timaeus.' His position — blind, begging, by the roadside — represents the lowest social status. Jericho was the last major stop before the ascent to Jerusalem.
47. Bartimaeus's cry 'Son of David' (Huie Daudid) is the first public messianic acclamation in Mark. The blind man sees what the sighted crowd does not — that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah. The plea 'have mercy on me' (eleēson me) echoes the psalms of lament (Psalm 6:2, 9:13, 51:1).
47. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 6:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
48. The crowd tries to silence Bartimaeus, but like the Syrophenician woman (7:26-28), he refuses to be deterred. His persistence intensifies — 'all the more' (pollō mallon). Faith in Mark is characterized by persistence in the face of opposition.
49. Jesus stops the entire procession for a blind beggar — a dramatic reversal of social convention. The crowd that tried to silence Bartimaeus now encourages him. The three imperatives — 'Take heart' (tharsei), 'Get up' (egeire), 'he is calling you' (phōnei se) — convey excitement.
50. The cloak (himation) was a beggar's most valuable possession — his bedding, his shelter, his collection surface for coins. Bartimaeus throws it aside without hesitation, in stark contrast to the rich man who could not part with his possessions (v. 22). The verb anapēdēsas ('sprang up, jumped up') conveys explosive energy.
51. The question is identical to verse 36, asked of James and John. The contrast in answers is devastating: James and John wanted thrones; Bartimaeus wants sight. Rabbouni (an intensified form of 'Rabbi') appears only here and in John 20:16 (Mary Magdalene at the tomb).
52. The phrase 'your faith has saved you' (hē pistis sou sesōken se) uses the perfect tense of sōzō, which means both 'save' and 'heal.' Unlike the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26) who was sent home, Bartimaeus follows Jesus 'on the way' (en tē hodō) — the way to Jerusalem, the way of the cross. His story closes the journey section that began in 8:22 with another blind man, forming an inclusio of restored sight.

11

Summary: *Mark 11 narrates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, the cursing of the fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, and a series of confrontations with the religious authorities. Jesus enters the city riding a colt in deliberate fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, the crowds hailing him with messianic acclamations. The fig tree episode frames the temple action — the fruitless tree symbolizes the fruitless temple. Jesus drives out the merchants, accusing them of turning God's house of prayer into a den of robbers. The chapter concludes with a teaching on faith and prayer, and a challenge to Jesus's authority that he parries with a counter-question about John the Baptist.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The fig tree and temple cleansing form a Markan 'sandwich' (intercalation): fig tree cursed (vv. 12-14), temple cleansed (vv. 15-19), fig tree withered (vv. 20-21). This literary structure signals that the fig tree interprets the temple — both are judged for failing to bear fruit. The quotation combining Isaiah 56:7 ('house of prayer for all nations') and Jeremiah 7:11 ('den of robbers') encapsulates Jesus's critique: the temple has failed its intended purpose of drawing all peoples to God.*

Translation Friction: *The cursing of the fig tree (v. 13) — especially Mark's note that 'it was not the season for figs' — has puzzled commentators. If it was not fig season, why expect fruit? The action is best understood as a prophetic sign-act (like Jeremiah's broken jar or Ezekiel's siege) rather than a display of frustration. The tree represents Israel's religious establishment. The 'den of robbers' language does not mean the merchants were overcharging; it means the temple itself had become a hideout for those who exploit others while maintaining a religious facade.*

Connections: The entry fulfills Zechariah 9:9 (the king coming on a donkey) and echoes 2 Kings 9:13 (garments spread for a new king). The temple action connects to Malachi 3:1-3 (the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple). The fig tree echoes Hosea 9:10, Jeremiah 8:13, and Micah 7:1, where figs symbolize Israel's faithfulness. The authority question (vv. 27-33) continues the pattern of Jesus turning hostile questions back on his questioners.

¹When they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²Says to them, Go your way into the village over opposed to you — and as soon as you be entered into it, you will find a colt tied, whereon never man sat. Loose him, and bring him. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴They went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵Some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸Many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹Those who went before and those who followed were crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹¹He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. After looking around at everything, since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. ¹²On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. ¹⁵They came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹⁶And he would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷He was teaching and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." ¹⁸The chief priests and the scribes heard this and were looking for a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹And when evening came, they went out of the city. ²⁰As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." ²²Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." ²⁷They came again to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him ²⁸Say to him, By what authority doest you these things? and who offered you this authority to do these things? ²⁹Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." ³¹They discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ³²But shall we say, 'From man'?" — they were afraid of the crowd, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Bethphage ('house of unripe figs') and Bethany ('house of affliction' or 'house of dates') were villages on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives carried eschatological significance — Zechariah 14:4 places God's final intervention there.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Zechariah 14:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The colt (pōlon) that has never been ridden fulfills the requirement that animals used for sacred purposes be previously unused (cf. Numbers 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3, 1 Samuel 6:7). Jesus's foreknowledge of the colt's location and circumstances suggests either prophetic insight or prior arrangement.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Numbers 19:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 21:3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 1 Samuel 6:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The title 'the Lord' (ho kyrios) is ambiguous — it could mean 'the owner' or 'the Master.' If the latter, it would be one of the rare instances in Mark where Jesus applies the title kyrios to himself.
4. The Greek amphodou ('street, lane, the open road') indicates a public thoroughfare. The detail confirms Jesus's prediction exactly.
5. The challenge comes exactly as Jesus predicted, allowing the disciples to give the pre-arranged response.
6. The smooth exchange suggests either that the owners recognized Jesus's authority or that the arrangement had been made beforehand.
7. Spreading garments on the animal serves as an improvised saddle but also echoes the acclamation of Jehu as king in 2 Kings 9:13, where the people spread their garments under him.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 2 Kings 9:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The Greek stibadas ('leafy branches, rushes, bedding of leaves') describes foliage cut from fields rather than palm branches specifically (that detail is in John 12:13). The gesture creates a processional carpet, a spontaneous royal welcome.
9. The crowd quotes Psalm 118:25-26, a Hallel psalm sung during Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. 'Hosanna' (hōsanna) transliterates the Hebrew hoshia-na ('save, please!' or 'save now!'). Originally a prayer for deliverance, it had become an acclamation of praise. 'He who comes' (ho erchomenos) carried messianic overtones — the 'coming one' was an expected deliverer.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 118:26. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The reference to 'the kingdom of our father David' is explicitly messianic and political — the crowd expects the restoration of David's kingdom. 'Hosanna in the highest' (en tois hypsistois, 'in the highest [heavens]') directs the acclamation upward, asking heaven itself to join the praise.
11. Mark uniquely records this preliminary survey visit — Jesus inspects the temple before acting. The verb periblespamenos ('having looked around') suggests a deliberate assessment. The temple cleansing the next day is therefore premeditated, not spontaneous. Jesus returns to Bethany for the night, probably staying with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (cf. John 11:1).
12. The note about hunger serves the narrative by motivating the approach to the fig tree, but the symbolic dimension is primary. The fig tree episode begins the Markan sandwich that frames the temple action.
13. Mark's explanatory note — 'for it was not the season for figs' (ho gar kairos ouk ēn sykōn) — seems to excuse the tree, making Jesus's response puzzling if taken as a literal quest for fruit. The action is best understood as a prophetic sign-act: the tree advertises fruitfulness (it has leaves) but produces nothing, just as the temple advertises God's presence but has become spiritually barren. Fig trees in the Old Testament regularly symbolize Israel (Hosea 9:10, Jeremiah 8:13, Micah 7:1).
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Hosea 9:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 8:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Micah 7:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The curse uses the optative mood (phagoi, 'may eat') — the strongest form of wish or prohibition. The note 'his disciples heard it' (ēkouon hoi mathētai autou) prepares for the discovery of the withered tree in verse 20 and the teaching that follows.
15. The action takes place in the Court of the Gentiles — the only area where non-Jews could pray. By filling this space with commerce, the temple authorities had effectively eliminated Gentile access to worship. The money changers (kollybistōn) converted foreign currency into the Tyrian shekels required for the temple tax. The pigeon sellers provided sacrificial animals for the poor (Leviticus 5:7, 12:8).
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 5:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The word skeuos ('vessel, object, goods') refers to commercial goods being transported as a shortcut through the temple courts. The Mishnah later prohibited this same practice (Berakhot 9:5), indicating that Jesus's concern was shared by later rabbinic authorities.
17. Jesus combines Isaiah 56:7 ('my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples') and Jeremiah 7:11 ('Has this house become a den of robbers?'). Mark alone includes 'for all the nations' (pasin tois ethnesin) — significant for his Gentile audience. The word lēstōn ('robbers, bandits, insurrectionists') is stronger than 'thieves' — Jeremiah used it for those who commit violence and then retreat to the temple for sanctuary.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 56:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 7:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The temple action seals Jesus's fate. The verb *apolesōsin* ('they might destroy') reveals murderous intent. The irony is layered: they fear Jesus because of his popularity, yet his popularity will not save him. The crowd is 'astonished' (*exēplēsseto*) but astonishment is not the same as faith.
19. Jesus continues the pattern of withdrawing from Jerusalem each evening, likely returning to Bethany. This may reflect both practical safety and the symbolic rejection of the city.
20. The phrase 'from the roots' (*ek rhizōn*) indicates total destruction — not merely wilted leaves but death from the foundation upward. The Markan sandwich is now complete: the withered tree interprets the temple cleansing. The temple, like the tree, advertises life but produces no fruit and faces judgment.
21. Peter's exclamation connects the cursing (v. 14) with the result (v. 20). Jesus will use the occasion to teach about faith and prayer, but the symbolic meaning — judgment on the barren temple — remains the primary narrative function.
22. The phrase *pistin theou* ('faith of God') could be translated 'faith in God' (objective genitive) or 'the kind of faith God has' (subjective genitive). Either way, the call is to radical trust in divine power.
23. 'This mountain' (*tō orei toutō*) may refer to the Mount of Olives or, more pointedly, to the Temple Mount visible from where they stood. The hyperbolic image of moving a mountain expresses the power of faith aligned with God's purposes. The verb *diakritherē* ('doubt, waver, be divided') literally means 'to be separated within oneself.'
24. The aorist tense *elabete* ('you received') is striking — Jesus says 'believe that you received,' using the past tense for a future reality. Faith treats the answer as already given. This does not describe a psychological technique but the confidence of prayer aligned with God's revealed will.
25. Standing (*stēkete*) was the normal Jewish posture for prayer. The connection between divine forgiveness and human forgiveness echoes the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). The word *paraptōmata* ('trespasses, transgressions, false steps') literally means 'falling beside' — stepping off the path.
26. Verse 26 is absent from the earliest and best manuscripts of Mark and is not included in the SBLGNT critical text. It appears to be a later scribal addition, possibly drawn from Matthew 6:15. We follow the SBLGNT in omitting it while retaining the verse number for reference.
27. The three groups — chief priests, scribes, elders — constitute the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council. Their approach is an official delegation, challenging Jesus's right to act as he did in cleansing the temple.
28. The question about authority (*exousia*) is legitimate from their perspective — they are the recognized authorities over the temple. 'These things' (*tauta*) refers to the temple cleansing, the teaching, and the implied messianic claims. The double question asks both the nature of the authority and its source.
29. Jesus's counter-question is not evasion but rabbinic method — answering a question with a question that, if answered honestly, would also answer the original. The connection between John's baptism and Jesus's authority will become clear in the next verses.
30. The binary question — 'from heaven' (divine origin) or 'from men' (human invention) — traps the authorities. If they say 'from heaven,' they must explain why they did not believe John, who testified about Jesus. If they say 'from men,' they risk the crowd's anger, since the people regarded John as a genuine prophet.
31. The leaders' internal deliberation reveals that their concern is political calculation, not truth. They are not asking 'What is the right answer?' but 'What answer will get us in the least trouble?'
32. The dash represents the breaking off of their deliberation — they cannot even finish the sentence because the consequences are too dangerous. The word *ontōs* ('really, actually, in truth') expresses the crowd's genuine conviction about John's prophetic status.
33. Their 'We do not know' (*Ouk oidamen*) is a lie — they have a strong opinion but are unwilling to state it publicly. Jesus's refusal to answer is not evasion but a response in kind: those who will not honestly answer a simple question have no right to demand answers from him. The contest of authority ends with Jesus in control.

12

Summary: *Mark 12 presents a series of confrontations in the temple courts during Jesus's final week in Jerusalem. Jesus tells the parable of the wicked tenants, exposing the religious leaders' rejection of God's messengers. The Pharisees and Herodians attempt to trap him with a question about taxes to Caesar, the Sadducees test him on the resurrection, and a scribe asks about the greatest commandment. Jesus then poses his own question about the Messiah's identity as David's son and Lord, warns against the scribes' hypocrisy, and commends a poor widow whose two small coins surpass every other offering.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The parable of the wicked tenants (vv. 1-12) draws directly on Isaiah 5's vineyard imagery and compresses Israel's prophetic history into a single narrative. The tribute question (v. 17) produces one of Jesus's most famous responses, which neither endorses nor condemns Roman taxation but reframes the entire question around what belongs to God. The exchange on the greatest commandment (vv. 28-34) is the only place in Mark where Jesus tells an interlocutor 'You are not far from the kingdom of God' — a striking affirmation within a chapter of conflict. The widow's offering (vv. 41-44) closes the temple teaching section with a devastating contrast between religious performance and genuine devotion.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'Render to Caesar' (v. 17) has been applied to justify everything from tax compliance to separation of church and state. The Greek apodote ('give back, return') implies returning what already belongs to someone, not simply paying a bill. The question about David's son (vv. 35-37) uses Psalm 110:1, which in Hebrew distinguishes YHWH (the LORD) from adoni ('my lord') — a distinction lost in Greek where kyrios covers both. We render the Greek as given while noting the Hebrew background.*

Connections: *The vineyard parable connects to Isaiah 5:1-7 and the rejected-stone quotation to Psalm 118:22-23. The Shema quotation (v. 29) anchors the chapter in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, while the love-of-neighbor command comes from Leviticus 19:18. Psalm 110:1 is the most-quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament, and Jesus's use of it here establishes a Christological argument that runs through early Christian preaching (Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13).*

¹And he began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went away. ²At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴Again he sent another servant to them, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵He sent yet another, and that one they killed. And so with many others — some they beat, and some they killed. ⁶He had still one other — a beloved son. He sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸And they seized him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Have you not read this Scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.' ¹¹And is it marvellous in our eyes?, and this was the Lord's doing. ¹²They were seeking to arrest him but feared the crowd, for they knew he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. ¹³Then they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to trap him in his words. ¹⁴They came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are truthful and do not defer to anyone, for you show no partiality but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" ¹⁵But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius so I can look at it." ¹⁶They brought one. And he said to them, "Whose image is this, and whose inscription?" They said to him, "Caesar's." ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him. ¹⁸Then Sadducees came to him — those who say there is no resurrection — and they asked him a question: ¹⁹"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰There were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and when he died he left no offspring. ²¹The second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third

likewise. ²²All seven left no offspring. Last of all, the woman also died. ²³In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." ²⁴Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong — that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. ²⁶But concerning the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? ²⁷He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly mistaken." ²⁸One of the scribes came and heard them debating. Seeing that Jesus had answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The most important is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³²The scribe said to him, "Well said, Teacher. You have truly stated that he is one, and there is no other besides him. ³³And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is far more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. ³⁵And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶David himself said by the Holy Spirit, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" ³⁷David himself calls him Lord, so how is he his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight. ³⁸And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to receive greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹The prominent places in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts. ⁴⁰They devour widows' houses and for a pretense make lengthy prayers. They will receive greater condemnation." ⁴¹He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴²And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³He called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in everything she had — all she had to live on."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The vineyard description echoes Isaiah 5:1-2 almost verbatim, and Jesus's audience would have recognized the allusion immediately. The Greek *georgois* ('farmers, tenants') denotes those who work the land under lease — they are caretakers, not owners.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 5:1-2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The Greek *kairos* ('season, appointed time') carries more theological weight than *chronos* ('chronological time'). The servant represents the prophets sent to Israel to call for covenant faithfulness.
3. The escalating pattern of violence against the servants mirrors the biblical pattern of prophetic rejection throughout Israel's history (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Nehemiah 9:26).
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Nehemiah 9:26 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The Greek *kephaliōsan* ('struck on the head') is a rare word. Some manuscripts and translations interpret it as stoning, but the verb derives from *kephalē* ('head') and most likely means they wounded his head.
5. The escalation from beating to killing compresses the history of prophetic martyrdom. The parable's audience — the chief priests, scribes, and elders (11:27) — would have recognized themselves in the tenants' role.
6. The phrase *huion agapēton* ('beloved son') echoes the voice from heaven at Jesus's baptism (1:11) and transfiguration (9:7), using identical language. Mark's audience would hear the parable as Jesus identifying himself as the beloved son who will be killed.
7. The Greek *klēronomos* ('heir') and *klēronomia* ('inheritance') carry covenantal weight — Israel's 'inheritance' is the land God promised. The tenants' reasoning exposes the logic of power: eliminate the rightful heir to seize what belongs to another.

8. In Mark's order, they kill first and cast out afterward — a detail that may foreshadow Jesus's death and burial outside the city walls. Matthew and Luke reverse the order to match the historical detail that Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem (cf. Hebrews 13:12).
9. In Mark, Jesus answers his own question — unlike Matthew 21:41 where the audience answers. The phrase 'give the vineyard to others' points beyond the parable to the inclusion of Gentiles or to a new community of faith.
10. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23, which was originally a psalm of thanksgiving for unexpected vindication. The 'stone' metaphor shifts from agriculture to construction but makes the same point: what the authorities reject, God exalts. The phrase *kephalēn gōnias* ('head of the corner') may refer to a cornerstone (foundation) or capstone (crowning stone).
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 118:22-23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The quotation continues from Psalm 118:23. The Greek *thaumastē* ('marvelous, wonderful') indicates something that provokes astonishment — God's reversal of human judgment is both surprising and awe-inspiring.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 118:22-23. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The leaders' recognition that the parable was directed 'against them' (*pros autous*) confirms its transparency. Their restraint is political, not moral — they fear the crowd's reaction, not God's judgment. This sets the stage for their clandestine plot in chapter 14.
13. The Pharisees and Herodians were natural enemies — the Pharisees resisted Roman cultural influence while the Herodians supported the Herodian dynasty and its Roman alliance. Their collaboration against Jesus reveals the depth of opposition. The Greek *agreuōsin* ('trap, catch, hunt') is a hunting term — they are stalking prey.
14. The flattery is calculated to prevent evasion. The Greek *kēnson* is a loanword from the Latin *census*, referring specifically to the Roman poll tax — a deeply resented symbol of subjugation. If Jesus says 'pay,' he alienates the populace; if he says 'don't pay,' he commits sedition against Rome. The phrase *ou blepeis eis prosōpon anthrōpōn* ('you do not look at the face of men') is a Semitic idiom meaning 'you show no partiality.'
15. The Greek *hypokrisin* ('hypocrisy') comes from the theater — a hypocrite is literally 'one who plays a role.' Jesus sees through the performance. The request for a coin is masterful: by producing a Roman denarius in the temple precincts, the questioners reveal that they already participate in Caesar's economy.
16. The Greek *eikōn* ('image') is theologically loaded — Genesis 1:26-27 declares that humans bear the image (*tselem*) of God. By asking whose image is on the coin, Jesus sets up a contrast: the coin bears Caesar's image, but human beings bear God's image. The inscription on a Tiberian denarius typically read 'Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus' — a claim that would have been offensive to Jewish monotheists.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:26-27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The Greek *apodote* ('give back, return, render') is stronger than 'give' — it implies returning what already belongs to someone. The second clause reframes everything: if Caesar's coins bear Caesar's image, then human beings — who bear God's image — belong entirely to God. The response neither endorses nor condemns taxation but subordinates all political claims to God's total claim on human life.
18. Mark introduces the Sadducees with a parenthetical note about their denial of the resurrection. The Sadducees accepted only the Torah (the five books of Moses) as authoritative and found no explicit resurrection teaching there. Their question is designed to make resurrection belief look absurd.
19. The Sadducees invoke the levirate marriage law from Deuteronomy 25:5-6. The term 'levirate' comes from the Latin *levir* ('husband's brother'). The purpose of the law was to preserve the deceased brother's name and inheritance within Israel — a practice also illustrated in the story of Ruth and Boaz.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 25:5-6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The scenario is likely hypothetical, constructed for maximum rhetorical effect. The number seven — the number of completeness — ensures the problem has no easy resolution by simply choosing one husband.
21. The repetitive structure is deliberate — each death without offspring intensifies the absurdity the Sadducees are constructing.
22. The scenario concludes with universal death — the very reality the Sadducees believe is final. Ironically, their story about death becomes the occasion for Jesus to teach about life beyond death.
23. The Sadducees' question assumes that resurrection life would be a simple continuation of earthly existence. Jesus's answer will challenge this assumption entirely, reframing resurrection as transformation rather than restoration.
24. Jesus identifies two sources of error: ignorance of Scripture and ignorance of God's power. The Greek *planasthe* ('you are led astray, you wander') implies not just intellectual error but spiritual disorientation. The charge is sharp — the Sadducees prided themselves on scriptural expertise.
25. Jesus does not say the resurrected become angels but that they are 'like' (*hōs*) angels in this specific respect — the institution of marriage, which addresses mortality and procreation, is transcended. This addresses the power of God that the Sadducees have underestimated: resurrection is not mere resuscitation but a transformation of the conditions of existence.

26. Jesus strategically argues from the Torah — the only portion of Scripture the Sadducees accepted as authoritative. The citation is Exodus 3:6. The reference 'in the passage about the bush' (epi tou batou) uses a method of citing Scripture by location, since there were no chapter and verse numbers. Jesus's argument is that God's use of the present tense 'I am' implies an ongoing relationship with the patriarchs — which requires their continued existence.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 3:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The concluding statement is emphatic: poly planasthe ('you are greatly in error'). The argument rests on the covenant relationship — if God identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then those patriarchs must still exist in some meaningful sense, because God's covenant faithfulness does not terminate at death.
28. Unlike the previous questioners, this scribe approaches with genuine interest — he has been impressed by Jesus's answers. The question about ranking commandments was a recognized topic in rabbinic discussion. Tradition counted 613 commandments in the Torah (248 positive, 365 negative), and rabbis debated which was the foundational principle.
29. Jesus begins with the Shema (Hebrew: 'Hear!'), from Deuteronomy 6:4, which every observant Jew recited twice daily. Only Mark includes this preamble; Matthew and Luke skip directly to the love command. By quoting the Shema, Jesus grounds the love command in monotheism — love for God is the proper response to the reality that there is only one God.
29. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 6:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
30. The fourfold formula (heart, soul, mind, strength) expands the Hebrew original in Deuteronomy 6:5, which has three terms (heart, soul, strength). The addition of 'mind' (dianoia) may reflect the Septuagint tradition or an interpretive expansion. The cumulative effect is totality — every dimension of human existence is to be oriented toward loving God.
30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
31. The neighbor command comes from Leviticus 19:18. Jesus's pairing of these two commandments — love of God and love of neighbor — was not entirely unique in Jewish tradition (cf. Testament of Issachar 5:2; Testament of Dan 5:3), but his elevation of them as the supreme summary of the law was distinctive. The phrase 'as yourself' (hōs seauton) sets self-love as the measure, not the motive, of neighbor-love.
31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 19:18. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
32. The scribe's affirmation is remarkable — he validates Jesus's teaching as a peer might, using the adverb kalōs ('well, rightly'). His restatement of the Shema adds the phrase 'there is no other besides him,' echoing Deuteronomy 4:35 and Isaiah 45:21.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 4:35. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 45:21. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. The scribe goes beyond Jesus's statement by adding a prophetic insight: love surpasses the entire sacrificial system. This echoes 1 Samuel 15:22 ('to obey is better than sacrifice'), Hosea 6:6 ('I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice'), and Micah 6:6-8. The word holokautōmatōn ('whole burnt offerings') refers to sacrifices entirely consumed by fire — the most complete form of offering — yet even these are surpassed by love.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Samuel 15:22 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Hosea 6:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Micah 6:6-8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
34. The Greek nounechōs ('wisely, thoughtfully, with understanding') is a rare word in the New Testament. Jesus's response — 'not far from the kingdom of God' — is both commendation and invitation. The scribe is close but not yet there; understanding is the threshold, but entry requires something more. The note that no one dared ask further questions marks the end of the public debate sequence that began in 11:27.
35. Having silenced his questioners, Jesus now poses his own question. He does not deny that the Messiah is David's son — the genealogies in Matthew and Luke affirm this — but he challenges the assumption that Davidic descent is the whole picture. The question probes whether 'son of David' adequately captures the Messiah's identity.
36. Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, attributing it to David and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the Hebrew, the first 'LORD' is YHWH and the second 'my lord' is adoni — a distinction lost in Greek where kyrios covers both. The psalm envisions a figure whom David calls 'my lord' being enthroned at God's right hand. Jesus's argument: if David calls the Messiah 'my lord,' the Messiah must be more than David's descendant.

36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 110:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
37. The question is not a denial of Davidic messiahship but an expansion of it — the Messiah is David's son and David's Lord simultaneously. The crowd's delight (hēdeōs, 'with pleasure, gladly') contrasts with the leaders' hostility. The common people enjoy seeing their leaders outmatched.
38. The Greek stolais ('long robes') refers to the flowing garments that marked a person of status and learning. The desire for public greetings (aspmous) in the marketplace reflects a culture of honor — being recognized and addressed with titles in public spaces.
39. The prōtokathedrias ('chief seats') in the synagogue were benches facing the congregation, reserved for the most respected members. The prōtoklisias ('first couches') at banquets were the reclining positions closest to the host. Both represent the social currency of religious prestige.
40. The Greek katesthiontes ('devour, consume') is vivid — these scribes are predators. 'Widows' houses' likely refers to mismanaging estates entrusted to their care or extracting excessive fees for legal or religious services. The phrase proophasei ('as a pretext, for show') exposes their prayers as performance. The 'greater condemnation' (perissoteron krima) implies degrees of judgment — those who exploit the vulnerable while performing piety bear heavier accountability. This warning about widows transitions directly into the widow's offering that follows.
41. The Greek gazophylakion ('treasury') refers to the temple collection receptacles, traditionally described as thirteen trumpet-shaped containers in the Court of Women. The verb etheōrei ('he was watching, observing') implies sustained, attentive observation — Jesus is not glancing but studying the scene.
42. The Greek lepta duo ('two lepta') represents the smallest denomination of currency in circulation — each lepton was worth half a quadrans (kodrantēs), the smallest Roman coin. Mark provides the Roman equivalent for his Gentile readers. The widow could have kept one coin for herself but gave both — a detail Jesus will emphasize.
43. The solemn introduction 'Truly I say to you' (amēn legō hymin) marks a pronouncement of special authority. The Greek pleion pantōn ('more than all') is absolute — not 'more than most' but more than the combined total of all other givers. Jesus measures generosity not by amount but by cost.
44. The contrast is between perisseuontos ('surplus, abundance') and husterēseōs ('lack, poverty, deficiency'). The final phrase holon ton bion autēs ('her whole livelihood') is devastating — bios here means not just 'life' but 'means of living.' She gave not from surplus but from substance. Coming after the warning about scribes who devour widows' houses (v. 40), this scene may also carry an ironic edge: the temple system that should protect widows instead receives their last resources.

13

Summary: *Mark 13, commonly called the Olivet Discourse, is Jesus's longest continuous teaching in Mark's Gospel. Prompted by a disciple's admiration of the temple, Jesus predicts its destruction and then delivers an extended prophetic address from the Mount of Olives to Peter, James, John, and Andrew. The discourse warns of false messiahs, wars, persecutions, cosmic upheaval, and the coming of the Son of Man. It concludes with the parable of the doorkeeper and repeated calls to watchfulness: 'Stay awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come.'*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The discourse blends near-future and eschatological horizons in ways that have generated centuries of interpretive debate. The destruction of the temple (fulfilled in AD 70) and the coming of the Son of Man appear interwoven rather than chronologically separated. The phrase 'this generation will not pass away until all these things take place' (v. 30) alongside 'concerning that day or hour, no one knows' (v. 32) creates a deliberate tension between imminence and unknowability. Jesus's admission that even 'the Son' does not know the timing (v. 32) is one of the most theologically striking statements in the Gospels.*

Translation Friction: *The relationship between the temple's destruction and the cosmic signs of vv. 24-27 is the central interpretive question. Preterist readers see the entire discourse fulfilled in AD 70; futurist readers see vv. 24-27 as still awaiting fulfillment; many scholars see a prophetic 'telescoping' where near and far events overlap. We render the Greek without imposing a particular eschatological framework. The 'abomination of desolation' (v. 14) alludes to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11, originally referring to Antiochus IV's desecration of the temple in 167 BC — Jesus reapplies it to a future event.*

Connections: *The discourse draws heavily on Daniel 7:13-14 (Son of Man coming on clouds), Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 (abomination of desolation), Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4 (cosmic signs), and Zechariah 2:6 (gathering from the four winds). The call to watchfulness connects to the Gethsemane scene in 14:32-42, where the same disciples fail to stay awake. The fig tree parable (vv. 28-29) echoes the cursed fig tree of 11:12-14, 20-21.*

¹As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look! What massive stones and what magnificent buildings!" ²Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another that will not be thrown down." ³As he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" ⁵Jesus began to say to them, "Watch out that no one leads you astray. ⁶Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and they will lead many astray. ⁷When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹But watch out for yourselves. They will hand you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹And when they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what to say. But say whatever is given to you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise against parents and have them put to death. ¹³You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴"But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be" — let the reader understand — "then let those in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵Let the one on the housetop not go down or enter to take anything out of his house. ¹⁶And let the one in the field not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁷How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing! ¹⁸Pray that it may not happen in winter. ¹⁹For in those days there will be tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. ²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he cut short the days. ²¹And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²²For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³But be on your guard. I have told you all things beforehand." ²⁴And the moon will not give her light, but at that time, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened. ²⁵The stars of heaven will fall, and the powers that are in heaven will be shaken. ²⁶And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows — not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son — but only the Father. ³³Be on guard, stay awake — for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, who left his house and put his servants in charge, each with his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵Therefore stay awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come — in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning — ³⁶Indeed, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ³⁷What I say to you, I say to all: Stay awake."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *potapoi* ('what sort of, what impressive') expresses wonder. Josephus describes the temple stones as approximately 37 feet long, 12 feet high, and 18 feet wide (*Antiquities* 15.392). Herod's temple complex was one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world, and the disciple's awe was entirely appropriate — which makes Jesus's response all the more shocking.
2. The double negative *ou mē* ('absolutely not') is the strongest form of denial in Greek. The prediction was fulfilled in AD 70 when Roman forces under Titus destroyed the temple. The phrase 'stone upon stone' became proverbial for total destruction. For Jesus's Jewish audience, this prediction was not merely architectural but theological — the temple was God's dwelling place on earth.
3. The Mount of Olives overlooks the temple mount from the east, providing a panoramic view of the complex Jesus has just predicted will be destroyed. The private audience — Peter, James, John, plus Andrew (who is not usually in this inner circle) — gives the discourse an intimate, revelatory character. In Jewish tradition, the Mount of Olives was associated with eschatological events (cf. *Zechariah* 14:4).
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References *Zechariah* 14:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

4. The disciples ask two questions: when (pote) and what sign (ti to sēmeion). In Mark, both questions concern the temple's destruction — unlike Matthew 24:3, which adds 'and of your coming and of the end of the age.' The Greek synteleisthai ('to be completed, accomplished, brought to an end') carries eschatological weight.
5. Jesus's first response is not an answer but a warning. The verb planēsē ('leads astray, deceives') is the same root used in 12:24, 27. The discourse begins not with timetables but with the imperative to avoid deception — the primary danger is not suffering but being led away from truth.
6. The phrase egō eimi ('I am') could mean 'I am the Christ' (supplying the predicate) or could echo the divine self-identification of Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 43:25. Mark does not add 'Christ' — the claim is left ambiguous and therefore more ominous. History records several messianic claimants in the decades before AD 70 (cf. Acts 5:36-37; Josephus, Antiquities 20.97-99, 169-172).
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 3:14. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 43:25. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The Greek dei ('it is necessary, it must') introduces divine necessity — these events are within God's sovereign plan, not evidence of its failure. The distinction between wars and the end (telos) is crucial: Jesus explicitly warns against interpreting every crisis as the final event.
8. The phrase archē ōdinōn ('beginning of birth pains') draws on a well-established Jewish metaphor — the 'birth pains of the Messiah' (chevlei mashiach) referred to the period of intense suffering expected to precede the messianic age. Birth pains imply purpose: the suffering leads to new life, not meaningless destruction.
9. The shift from 'they' to 'you' personalizes the warning. The Greek paradōsoun ('they will hand over') uses the same verb used for Judas's betrayal (paradidōmi) — the disciples will be 'handed over' just as Jesus will be. Synedria ('councils') refers to local Jewish courts; synagogues were places of communal discipline including flogging; governors and kings represent Roman authority. The phrase eis martyriōn autois could mean 'as a testimony to them' or 'as evidence against them.'
10. This verse interrupts the persecution sequence with a mission imperative — before the end comes, the gospel must reach all nations (panta ta ethnē). The dei ('must') again signals divine necessity. The word kērychthenai ('be proclaimed, be heralded') comes from kēryx ('herald') — the gospel is a public announcement, not a private philosophy.
11. The Greek promerimnate ('worry beforehand, be anxious in advance') is a compound word unique to this passage — the prefix pro- ('before') intensifies the prohibition against pre-trial anxiety. The promise of the Holy Spirit's aid in persecution is one of Mark's clearest pneumatological statements.
12. The disintegration of family bonds under persecution echoes Micah 7:6, which Jesus also cites in Matthew 10:35-36. The Greek paradōsei ('will hand over, betray') again uses the paradidōmi language. The escalation is severe: even the most fundamental human bonds — sibling, parent-child — will fracture under the pressure of allegiance to Jesus.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Micah 7:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The promise is conditional on endurance (hypomeinas, 'having endured, having stood firm'). The Greek telos ('end') could refer to the end of the individual's life or the eschatological end. The verb sōthēsetai ('will be saved') encompasses both physical deliverance and ultimate salvation — the ambiguity may be intentional.
14. The phrase bdelygma tēs erēmōseōs ('abomination of desolation') comes from Daniel (9:27, 11:31, 12:11), where it refers to the pagan altar Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected in the temple in 167 BC. Jesus reapplies the phrase to a future desecration. The masculine participle hestēkota ('standing') with a neuter noun (bdelygma) may hint at a personal figure. The parenthetical 'let the reader understand' is Mark's editorial aside — addressing those who will later read the Gospel, urging them to discern the contemporary application.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 9:27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. Flat-roofed houses in first-century Palestine had external staircases; one could descend directly to the street without entering the house. The urgency is total — there is no time to retrieve possessions. The imagery conveys the speed required when the crisis arrives.
16. Workers in the field would leave their outer garment (himation) at the edge of the field while working. Even this brief detour is too dangerous. The echo of Lot's flight from Sodom (Genesis 19:17, 'Do not look back') may be intentional.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 19:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The Greek ouai ('woe, alas') expresses grief rather than condemnation — Jesus is lamenting, not cursing. Pregnant and nursing women cannot flee quickly and are especially vulnerable during siege warfare. Josephus's account of the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 confirms the horrifying reality of these words (War 5-6).
18. The Greek cheimōnos ('winter, stormy season') refers to the rainy season when wadis flood and mountain travel becomes treacherous. The instruction to pray implies that while the event is certain, its timing and circumstances may be influenced by prayer.

19. The language echoes Daniel 12:1. The Greek *thlipsis* ('tribulation, distress, affliction') is a key eschatological term. The phrase 'from the beginning of creation' (*ap' archēs ktiseōs*) sets the tribulation against the entire sweep of cosmic history. Whether this refers solely to the siege of Jerusalem or to a still-future tribulation has been debated since the early church.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 12:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The Greek *ekolobōsen* ('shortened, cut short, curtailed') implies divine intervention to limit the duration of suffering. The phrase *pasa sarx* ('all flesh') is a Hebraism meaning 'any human being.' The *eklektous* ('elect, chosen ones') refers to God's people — those chosen by grace, for whose preservation God restrains the full measure of tribulation.
21. The warning repeats the opening theme (v. 5-6). In times of crisis, messianic expectation intensifies and false claims proliferate. The imperative *mē pisteuete* ('do not believe') is categorical — no exception is allowed.
22. The Greek *pseudochristoi* ('false christs') and *pseudoprophētai* ('false prophets') are compound words indicating counterfeit versions of the real. The phrase *ei dynaton* ('if possible') implies that the elect will be severely tested but are ultimately guarded by God's sovereign choice. Signs and wonders alone do not validate a messenger — a principle established in Deuteronomy 13:1-3.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 13:1-3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. The emphatic *hymeis* ('you yourselves') places responsibility squarely on the disciples. The verb *proeirēka* ('I have told beforehand') means that forewarning eliminates the excuse of surprise. Jesus's prophecy is not meant to satisfy curiosity but to equip for faithfulness.
24. The cosmic imagery draws on Isaiah 13:10 (judgment on Babylon) and Joel 2:10, 31. In Old Testament prophetic language, the darkening of sun and moon frequently symbolizes the collapse of political powers and the upheaval of the existing order. Whether this is literal astronomical phenomena or symbolic prophetic language (or both) is a central interpretive question.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 13:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. The language continues from Isaiah 34:4. The 'powers in the heavens' (*dynameis hai en tois ouranois*) may refer to celestial bodies, angelic beings, or spiritual forces — the Greek is deliberately encompassing. The shaking of cosmic structures signals that the entire created order is being disrupted in anticipation of God's decisive intervention.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 34:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The primary allusion is Daniel 7:13-14, where 'one like a son of man' comes on the clouds of heaven to receive dominion, glory, and kingdom from the Ancient of Days. In Daniel, the figure comes to God (ascending), not from God (descending) — which complicates simplistic interpretations. Jesus identifies himself as this figure throughout Mark (2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 8:38, 9:9, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 14:21, 14:41, 14:62).
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The gathering of the elect echoes Deuteronomy 30:4 ('Even if your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you') and Zechariah 2:6 (the four winds). The phrase *ap' akrou gēs heōs akrou ouranou* ('from the end of earth to the end of heaven') is a merism expressing totality — no elect person will be left behind.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 30:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zechariah 2:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. The fig tree parable uses observable nature to teach discernment. In Palestine, the fig tree is one of the last trees to leaf out in spring, making its budding an unmistakable sign of approaching summer. The connection to the cursed fig tree in 11:12-14, 20-21 may be intentional — the fig tree that symbolized Israel's failed fruitfulness now serves as a parable of eschatological awareness.
29. The Greek *epi thurais* ('at the doors/gates') implies imminent arrival. The subject of 'is near' is ambiguous — it could be 'it' (the end) or 'he' (the Son of Man). We render 'he' following the Danielic context of verse 26, but the ambiguity may be deliberate.
30. This is one of the most debated verses in the Gospels. The Greek *genea* ('generation') most naturally means the people alive at the time of speaking — approximately 40 years, which would reach to AD 70. Some interpreters take 'generation' to mean 'race' (i.e., the Jewish people) or 'type of people' (i.e., the faithless), but these readings strain the word's normal usage. If 'all these things' includes the temple's destruction, the prophecy was fulfilled within the generation. If it includes the cosmic signs of vv. 24-27, the interpretive puzzle remains.
31. The claim is extraordinary: Jesus places his own words on a level of permanence that surpasses the physical cosmos. The double negative *ou mē* ('absolutely will not') strengthens the guarantee. In the Old Testament, only God's word is described with such permanence (Isaiah 40:8; 55:11). Jesus implicitly claims divine authority for his teaching.

31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 40:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
32. Jesus's admission that 'the Son' does not know the timing is one of the most theologically remarkable statements in the Gospels. It asserts a genuine limitation of knowledge within the incarnation. The ascending hierarchy of ignorance — humans, angels, the Son — makes the Father's exclusive knowledge emphatic. Some manuscripts omit 'nor the Son,' likely due to theological discomfort, but the harder reading is almost certainly original.
33. The twin imperatives *blepete* ('watch out, be alert') and *agrypneite* ('stay awake, be vigilant') establish the discourse's practical conclusion. The Greek *kairos* ('appointed time') is distinct from *chronos* — it is the decisive moment, not the passing of hours. Not knowing the time is not cause for anxiety but for constant readiness.
34. The parable of the absent master is unique to Mark in this form. Each servant receives *exousia* ('authority') and a specific *ergon* ('task, work'). The doorkeeper (*thyroōros*) receives the explicit command to watch — his role is vigilance itself. The parable implies that Jesus's departure places responsibility on his followers.
35. The four watches of the night correspond to the Roman division: evening (6-9 PM), midnight (9 PM-12 AM), rooster-crowing (12-3 AM), and morning (3-6 AM). The mention of *alektorophōnias* ('rooster-crowing') foreshadows Peter's denial in 14:30, 72, adding dramatic irony — Peter, who is hearing this warning, will fail to 'stay awake' in precisely this watch.
36. The Greek *katheudontas* ('sleeping') will recur in Gethsemane (14:37, 40, 41), where Jesus finds Peter, James, and John — the very audience of this discourse — sleeping when they should be watching. The literary connection between the Olivet Discourse and Gethsemane is deliberate.
37. The final word — *grēgoreite* ('stay awake, be watchful') — breaks the private frame of the discourse and addresses all of Mark's readers across time. The Greek *pasin* ('to all') universalizes the command beyond the four disciples on the Mount of Olives. The entire discourse concludes not with a timetable but with an imperative.

14

Summary: *Mark 14 narrates the final hours before Jesus's crucifixion in dense, rapid sequence. The chapter opens with the plot to kill Jesus and the anointing at Bethany, where a woman pours costly perfume over his head. Judas arranges to betray him. Jesus celebrates the Passover meal with his disciples, institutes the Lord's Supper, and predicts Peter's denial. In Gethsemane, Jesus prays in anguish while his disciples sleep. Judas arrives with an armed crowd, Jesus is arrested, and a young man flees naked. Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin, where he declares himself the Christ and the Son of the Blessed One. Peter, waiting in the courtyard below, denies knowing Jesus three times — and the rooster crows.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The anointing woman (vv. 3-9) is the only person in Mark's Gospel whom Jesus says will be memorialized 'wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world' — yet Mark never gives her name. The Last Supper (vv. 22-25) reinterprets the Passover through Jesus's own body and blood, creating the central ritual of Christian worship. Jesus's Gethsemane prayer (v. 36) with its Aramaic 'Abba' is the most intimate window into his inner life. His confession before the high priest (v. 62) breaks the 'messianic secret' that has defined Mark's narrative — only now, when it will lead to his death, does Jesus openly claim his identity. Peter's denial fulfills the prediction of verse 30 with devastating precision.*

Translation Friction: *The trial scene raises historical questions about Jewish legal procedure — holding a capital trial at night during a festival appears to violate Mishnaic rules (Sanhedrin 4:1), though the Mishnah postdates this event. We render the text as Mark presents it without adjudicating historicity. The young man who flees naked (vv. 51-52) is unique to Mark and has generated extensive speculation — some identify him as Mark himself, others as a symbolic figure representing the disciples' total abandonment. The Greek is straightforward; we render it without speculation.*

Connections: *The anointing connects to burial customs and anticipates 16:1. The Passover setting connects to Exodus 12. The cup saying echoes Exodus 24:8 ('the blood of the covenant') and Jeremiah 31:31 ('new covenant'). The Gethsemane prayer echoes Psalm 42:5-6 ('My soul is deeply grieved'). Jesus's trial declaration combines Psalm 110:1 (sitting at the right hand) and Daniel 7:13 (coming on clouds). Peter's denial fulfills 14:30 and contrasts with the Olivet Discourse command to 'stay awake' (13:37).*

¹It was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ²Yet they stated, Not on the festival day, lest there be an uproar of the people. ³While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he reclined at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment of pure nard. She broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴Some were indignant, saying to one another, "Why was this ointment wasted? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her harshly. ⁶But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." ¹⁰To betray him to them, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests. ¹¹When they heard this, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he began looking for an opportunity to betray him. ¹²On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴Wheresoever he will go in, say you to the goodman of the home, The Master says, Where is the guestchamber, where I will eat the passover with my followers? ¹⁵He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶The disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸As they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with me." ¹⁹They began to be grieved and to say to him one by one, "Surely not I?" ²⁰He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²²While they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³He gave it to them — and they all drank of it, he took the cup, and after he had given thanks. ²⁴And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶They left into the mount of olives, and after they had sung an hymn. ²⁷Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' ²⁸But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹Peter said to him, "Even if they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, today — this very night — before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹But he kept saying emphatically, "Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you." And they all said the same. ³²They came to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake." ³⁵Going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷He came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not stay awake one hour? ³⁸Stay awake and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹Again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is near." ⁴³Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came — one of the twelve — and with him a crowd armed with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴Now his betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Arrest him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵When he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁴⁶Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. ⁴⁷But one of those standing by drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a rebel? ⁴⁹Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." ⁵⁰And they all left him and fled. ⁵¹A young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They seized him, ⁵²He departed

the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. ⁵³They led Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes assembled. ⁵⁴Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest, and he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they could not find any. ⁵⁶For many bore false witness against him, but their testimonies did not agree. ⁵⁷Some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹Yet even in this their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰The high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶¹But he remained silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" ⁶²Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³The high priest tore his garments and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemy! What is your judgment?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵Some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with slaps. ⁶⁶While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷When she noticed Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and stated, "And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁶⁸But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the gateway, and a rooster crowed. ⁶⁹The servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." ⁷⁰But again he denied it. After a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." ⁷¹But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about." ⁷²Immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *pascha* is a transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *pesach* ('Passover'). The Feast of Unleavened Bread (*ta azyma*) technically followed Passover but by the first century the terms were used interchangeably for the entire festival period. The phrase *en dolō* ('by stealth, by deceit') reveals the conspirators' awareness that a public arrest would provoke a riot.
2. The irony is that Jesus will be arrested and executed during the feast — the very timing they tried to avoid. The Greek *thorybos* ('uproar, riot, commotion') reflects the volatile political atmosphere. Jerusalem's population swelled enormously during Passover, and the festival's themes of liberation from slavery made Roman and priestly authorities especially nervous.
3. The Greek *alabastron* refers to a sealed flask with a long neck that had to be broken to release its contents — the breaking means the entire quantity was given at once, with nothing held back. *Nard* (*nardos*) is an aromatic plant from the Himalayas; the adjective *pistikēs* probably means 'pure, genuine' (from *pistos*, 'faithful, reliable'). The anointing of the head is a royal action — kings were anointed on the head (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13). Mark does not name this woman.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Samuel 10:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The Greek *aganaktountes* ('being indignant, being angry') is the same word used when the disciples were indignant about James and John's request (10:41). Mark says 'some' without specifying who — John 12:4 identifies Judas. The word *apōleia* ('waste, loss, destruction') frames the woman's gift as reckless extravagance.
5. Three hundred denarii represented roughly a year's wages for a common laborer (one denarius per day). The objection sounds morally serious — the poor are genuine. But Jesus will reframe the woman's act as itself a moral priority. The Greek *enebrimōnto* ('scolded harshly, rebuked, snorted at') is a strong word suggesting anger and contempt.
6. The Greek *kalon ergon* ('good/beautiful work') can mean either morally good or aesthetically beautiful. Jesus defends the woman against the group's hostility. The phrase 'in me' (*en emoi*) is striking — the act was performed on Jesus and finds its meaning in relation to him.
7. This echoes Deuteronomy 15:11 ('there will never cease to be poor in the land'), which is not a dismissal of poverty but a recognition that care for the poor is a permanent obligation. Jesus's point is not that the poor do not matter but that this moment — his imminent death — is unrepeatable. The opportunity to serve the poor is ongoing; the opportunity to anoint Jesus for burial is not.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 15:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

8. The phrase *proelaben myrisai* ('anointed beforehand') interprets the woman's act as prophetic preparation for Jesus's death. Whether she intended this meaning is unclear — Jesus assigns it regardless. The word *entaphiasmon* ('burial preparation') connects to 15:46 and 16:1, where the women who come to anoint Jesus after death find the tomb empty. This woman alone succeeded in anointing Jesus's body.
9. Jesus promises this unnamed woman a memorial (*mnēmosynon*) coextensive with the gospel's reach — wherever the good news goes, her story goes with it. The irony is pointed: the religious leaders will be remembered for plotting murder, the disciples for failing and fleeing, but this woman will be remembered for an act of extravagant devotion.
10. Mark places Judas's betrayal immediately after the anointing, creating a stark juxtaposition: a woman gives everything for Jesus; one of the twelve sells him out. The phrase *ho heis tōn dōdeka* ('the one of the twelve') emphasizes the scandal — this is not an outsider but a member of the inner circle. The Greek *paradoi* ('betray, hand over') uses the same *paradidōmi* language that runs throughout the passion narrative.
11. The chief priests' gladness (*echarēsan*) at finding an insider willing to betray Jesus contrasts with their earlier fear of public reaction (v. 2). The word *eukairōs* ('conveniently, at the right moment') suggests Judas was looking for a time when Jesus was away from the protective crowds.
12. The Passover lambs were sacrificed in the temple on the afternoon of Nisan 14. Mark's chronology places the Last Supper as a Passover meal — a point of tension with John's Gospel, which places the crucifixion on Nisan 14 when the lambs were being sacrificed. We render Mark's text as given.
13. A man carrying a water jar (*keramion hydatos*) would be unusual — water-carrying was typically women's work. This distinctive detail would make the man easy to identify. The prearranged sign suggests Jesus had made preparations, possibly secretly to prevent Judas from knowing the location in advance.
14. The Greek *katalyma* ('guest room, lodging') is the same word used in Luke 2:7 for the place where there was 'no room.' Here it refers to a room made available for Passover pilgrims. Jesus's use of 'my guest room' (to *katalyma mou*) suggests prior arrangement. The title 'the Teacher' (*ho didaskalos*) serves as an identifying code between Jesus and the homeowner.
15. The *anagaion* ('upper room') was a second-story room, often the largest space in a house. The word *estrōmenon* ('furnished, spread with carpets/cushions') indicates the room was already prepared for reclining at a meal. Passover preparations would include roasting the lamb, preparing unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and wine.
16. The phrase *kathōs eipen autois* ('just as he had told them') emphasizes Jesus's foreknowledge and control of events — even as his enemies plot against him, the details unfold according to his arrangements.
17. Evening (*opsias*) marked the beginning of Nisan 15 by Jewish reckoning, since the day began at sunset. Jesus arrives with 'the twelve' — including Judas, whose betrayal plan is already in motion.
18. The phrase *ho esthiōn met' emou* ('the one eating with me') echoes Psalm 41:9 ('Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me'). Sharing a meal in ancient Near Eastern culture established a bond of trust and obligation — betrayal by a table companion was the deepest violation of hospitality and fellowship.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 41:9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
20. The Greek *mēti egō* expects a negative answer ('It's not I, is it?') — but the fact that each disciple asks reveals their own uncertainty about their loyalty. The phrase *heis kata heis* ('one by one, one after another') emphasizes that every single disciple asks the question, including Judas.
21. The Greek *embaptomenos* ('dipping') refers to dipping bread or herbs into a common dish — a standard part of the Passover meal. Jesus does not name Judas directly but narrows the identification. The shared dish intensifies the intimacy of the betrayal.
22. The statement holds two truths in tension: divine necessity ('as it is written') and human responsibility ('woe to that man'). The Son of Man's death is part of God's plan revealed in Scripture, yet Judas bears full moral culpability. The phrase *kalon autō ei ouk egennēthē* ('better for him if he had not been born') is among the most severe judgments Jesus pronounces on any individual.
23. The four verbs — took (*labōn*), blessed (*eulogēsas*), broke (*eklasen*), gave (*edōken*) — became the foundational pattern of Christian eucharistic practice. The blessing would have been the standard Jewish bread blessing: 'Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.' The declaration *touto estin to sōma mou* ('this is my body') is without precedent in Jewish Passover practice and has generated centuries of theological debate about its meaning.
24. The Greek *eucharistēsas* ('having given thanks') is the root of 'Eucharist,' the term later used for the Lord's Supper. The Passover meal included four cups of wine; this is likely the third cup, called the 'cup of blessing' (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16). Mark notes that all drank — including Judas, whose presence at this table of covenant renewal deepens the tragedy of his betrayal.
25. The phrase 'blood of the covenant' (*haima tēs diathēkēs*) echoes Exodus 24:8, where Moses sprinkled blood on the people saying, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you.' Jesus identifies his own death as the sacrifice that seals a new covenant. The SBLGNT does not include the word 'new' (*kainēs*) before 'covenant,' though some manuscripts add it under the influence of Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25. The phrase *hyper pollōn* ('for many') echoes Isaiah 53:12 and Mark 10:45.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 24:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 53:12. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. Jesus declares this cup his last until the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of God. The phrase *kainon* ('new') suggests not merely temporal newness but qualitative transformation — a new kind of celebration in a renewed creation. The vow of abstinence gives the Last Supper both finality and hope: the next shared cup will be in God's kingdom.
26. The hymn (*hymnēsantes*) was almost certainly the second half of the Hallel — Psalms 115-118 — which was sung at the conclusion of the Passover meal. Psalm 118 contains the rejected-stone quotation Jesus used in 12:10-11 and the words 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (118:26), sung at his entry into Jerusalem (11:9). The psalms Jesus sang on the way to his death contained his own story.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 115-118. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The Greek *skandalisthēsesthe* ('you will be caused to stumble, you will fall away') is from *skandalon* ('stumbling block'). The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7, with a significant change: the Hebrew has 'Strike the shepherd' (imperative), but the Greek uses the first person 'I will strike' — God himself strikes the shepherd. Jesus's death is simultaneously human violence and divine action.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zechariah 13:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. This promise is recalled by the young man at the empty tomb (16:7). The verb *proaxō* ('I will go before you, I will lead you') is a shepherd's term — the scattered sheep will be regathered by their risen shepherd in Galilee, where the story began. The passive *egerthēnai* ('to be raised') implies that God raises Jesus, consistent with early Christian theology.
29. Peter's declaration exemplifies confident self-assurance that overestimates one's own strength. The emphatic *ouk egō* ('not I') sets Peter apart from the group — he claims an exceptional loyalty that he will fail to deliver. This overconfidence was anticipated in Jesus's Olivet Discourse warning to 'watch and be on guard' (13:33).
30. Mark specifies 'twice' (*dis*) for the rooster and 'three times' (*tris*) for the denial — more precise than Matthew and Luke. The temporal markers 'today' (*sēmeron*) and 'this night' (*tautē tē nykti*) compress the timeline — Peter's failure is not distant but imminent. The verb *aparnēsē* ('you will deny, disown') means more than simple contradiction; it is a public repudiation of relationship.
31. The Greek *ekperissōs* ('emphatically, exceedingly, vehemently') shows Peter doubling down on his claim. The conditional *ean deē me synapothanein soi* ('even if it is necessary for me to die with you') raises the stakes to the ultimate level — Peter pledges his life. The final note that 'they all said the same' (*hōsautōs de kai pantes elegon*) means every disciple made this pledge and every disciple will break it.
32. The name *Gethsēmani* comes from the Aramaic *gat shemane*, meaning 'oil press' — an olive oil production site on the Mount of Olives. John 18:1 identifies it as a garden across the Kidron Valley from the temple. The instruction to 'sit here' separates the larger group from the inner three.
33. The same three disciples who witnessed the transfiguration (9:2) now witness the agony. The Greek *ekthambeisthai* ('to be deeply distressed, terrified, alarmed') is a strong word unique to Mark — it suggests something beyond sorrow, closer to horror or dread. The verb *adēmonein* ('to be troubled, anxious, distressed') adds a dimension of anguished restlessness.
34. The language echoes Psalm 42:5-6, 11 and 43:5 ('Why are you cast down, O my soul?'). The phrase *heōs thanatou* ('to the point of death') means the grief itself is life-threatening — this is not mere sadness but existential anguish. The command *grēgoreite* ('stay awake, watch') directly recalls the Olivet Discourse (13:34-37) — the very thing Jesus commanded, the disciples will fail to do.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 42:5-6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. Falling on the ground (*epipten epi tēs gēs*) is the posture of extreme desperation — not kneeling but prostration. The Greek *hōra* ('hour') carries the weight of the entire passion — it is the divinely appointed moment toward which the entire Gospel has been moving (cf. John 12:27). Jesus's prayer 'if it is possible' acknowledges God's sovereignty while expressing genuine human desire to avoid the coming suffering.
36. Mark preserves the Aramaic *Abba* alongside the Greek *ho patēr* ('the Father'). *Abba* is an intimate family term — not the casual 'daddy' sometimes claimed, but a term of close, trusting relationship rarely used for God in Jewish prayer. The 'cup' (*potērion*) is a biblical metaphor for God's wrath and judgment (Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15-16). Jesus's final clause — 'not what I will, but what you will' — is the supreme expression of obedient submission.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 51:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 25:15-16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
37. Jesus addresses Peter by his original name 'Simon' — not 'Peter' (the Rock). The shift may signal disappointment: the man who pledged to die with Jesus cannot manage one hour of wakefulness. The Greek *mian hōran* ('one hour') is painfully minimal — the request was modest, and even that proved too much.
38. The Greek *peirasmon* ('temptation, trial, testing') encompasses both moral temptation and eschatological trial. The aphorism about spirit and flesh does not reflect later Greek dualism but a Semitic understanding: the human will (*pneuma*, 'spirit') desires faithfulness, but human limitation (*sarx*,

'flesh') makes failure possible. Jesus diagnoses the disciples' condition with compassion, not contempt.

39. The repetition — 'the same words' (ton auton logon) — is not formulaic but reflects the intensity of the struggle. Jesus's prayer does not evolve into acceptance through new arguments; he submits by returning to the same petition and the same surrender, again and again.
40. The Greek katabarynomenoi ('weighed down, very heavy') suggests a physical heaviness beyond mere tiredness — it may reflect the emotional exhaustion of grief and confusion. The clause ouk ēdeisan ti apokrithōsin autō ('they did not know what to answer him') echoes Peter's bewildered response at the transfiguration (9:6). When faced with divine moments beyond their comprehension, the disciples are speechless.
41. The Greek apechei is notoriously difficult — it can mean 'it is enough,' 'the account is settled,' or 'he (Judas) has received (his payment).' We follow the most common reading, 'It is enough.' The phrase ēlthen hē hōra ('the hour has come') marks the decisive turning point. The present tense paradidotai ('is being betrayed') captures the action in progress — Judas is already approaching.
42. The command egeireste agōmen ('get up, let us go') is striking — Jesus does not flee but moves toward his betrayer. The verb ēggiken ('has drawn near, is at hand') is the same word used for the arrival of the kingdom of God (1:15). The hour of supreme evil and the hour of God's decisive action are one and the same moment.
43. Mark's characteristic euthys ('immediately') accelerates the narrative. The parenthetical 'one of the twelve' (heis tōn dōdeka) is repeated from verse 10, driving the scandal home again. The crowd comes armed with machairan ('swords') and xylōn ('clubs, wooden weapons') — the swords likely carried by temple police, the clubs by hired servants. The three groups — chief priests, scribes, elders — constitute the Sanhedrin.
44. The Greek syssēmon ('pre-arranged signal, sign') is a military term. The kiss (philēsō) was a standard greeting between a disciple and his rabbi — a sign of respect and affection. Judas weaponizes intimacy. The word asphalōs ('securely, safely, under guard') suggests they feared Jesus might escape or that the crowd might intervene.
45. The Greek katēphilēsen is an intensified form of phileō — 'kissed warmly, kissed repeatedly, kissed fervently.' The intensified verb makes the betrayal more grotesque: Judas does not give a perfunctory peck but an effusive greeting. The title 'Rabbi' ('my great one, my teacher') adds another layer of bitter irony — the language of discipleship employed to betray the master.
46. The Greek epebalon tas cheiras ('laid hands on') and ektratēsan ('seized, arrested') are violent terms. The arrest is physical and forceful. Jesus offers no resistance — a detail that becomes explicit in the next verses.
47. Mark does not identify this swordsman — John 18:10 names him as Peter and the servant as Malchus. The Greek ōtaron ('ear,' diminutive) may refer to the earlobe. The act of violence is futile and immediately abandoned — no further resistance occurs. Jesus will address this act in the next verse.
48. The Greek lēstēs ('robber, bandit, insurrectionist') is the same word used for the two men crucified alongside Jesus (15:27) and for those who had turned the temple into a 'den of robbers' (11:17). The term carried revolutionary connotations — Josephus uses it for armed Jewish resistance fighters. Jesus's question exposes the absurdity of armed force against a teacher who has been publicly accessible in the temple.
49. Jesus points out the hypocrisy of a nighttime ambush by those who could have arrested him publicly. The phrase alla hina plērōthōsin hai graphai ('but let the Scriptures be fulfilled') is not resignation but recognition — Jesus interprets his arrest as the fulfillment of God's plan revealed in Scripture.
50. The Greek aphenes auton ('leaving him, abandoning him') and ephygon pantes ('all fled') fulfills the prediction of verse 27 — the sheep scatter when the shepherd is struck. The word pantes ('all') is absolute: not one disciple remained. The contrast with their collective pledge in verse 31 is devastating.
51. This episode is unique to Mark. The neaniskos ('young man') wearing only a sindona ('linen cloth') over his naked body has generated much speculation. Some identify him with Mark himself (an autobiographical detail), others with the young man at the tomb (16:5, same word neaniskos). The linen cloth (sindon) is the same word used for Jesus's burial shroud (15:46). The scene may symbolize the stripping away of everything — even a follower's last garment — in the hour of abandonment.
52. The flight into nakedness (gymnos ephygen) represents total loss — not merely of garments but of dignity and identity. The scene is the nadir of the disciples' failure: all have fled, and the last follower runs away with nothing. Some scholars see an echo of Amos 2:16 ('The bravest among warriors will flee naked on that day').
52. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Amos 2:16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
53. Mark does not name the high priest — Matthew 26:57 identifies him as Caiaphas. The assembly of 'all' (pantes) the chief priests, elders, and scribes constitutes a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish governing council of seventy-one members.
54. Mark sets up a literary intercalation (sandwich structure): the trial of Jesus (vv. 55-65) is nested between the introduction (v. 54) and conclusion (vv. 66-72) of Peter's denial. While Jesus confesses his identity above, Peter denies his below. The phrase apo makrothen ('from a distance') captures Peter's compromised position — following, but not close enough to be identified as a disciple. The fire (phōs, literally 'light') will illuminate him in the darkness.

55. The Greek synedrion ('council, Sanhedrin') refers to the supreme judicial body. The imperfect tense *ezētoun* ('were seeking') and *ouch hēuriskon* ('were not finding') describe repeated, frustrated attempts. The outcome — execution (*thanatōsai*) — was predetermined; they needed only the legal basis. Mark presents the trial as a miscarriage of justice.
56. Jewish law required the testimony of at least two witnesses to agree (Deuteronomy 19:15). The Greek *pseudoemarturoun* ('bore false testimony') and the note that their testimony was not *isai* ('equal, consistent') means the legal standard was not met — even by the prosecution's own rules.
56. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 19:15. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
57. Mark again labels this testimony as false (*epseudomarturoun*), even though the substance of the claim (the next verse) contains a distorted version of something Jesus may actually have said (cf. John 2:19). The distortion, not the fabrication, makes it false witness.
58. The contrast between *cheiropoiēton* ('made with hands') and *acheiropoiēton* ('not made with hands') is theologically loaded. In the Septuagint, 'made with hands' often describes idols (Isaiah 2:18; 10:11). The charge distorts Jesus's words but ironically states a deep truth: through his death and resurrection ('three days'), a new temple — his risen body and the community of faith — will indeed replace the physical temple.
58. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 2:18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
59. The repeated failure of witnesses to agree underscores the illegitimacy of the proceedings. By the Sanhedrin's own legal standards, there was no valid basis for conviction.
60. The high priest's frustration is evident — the witnesses have failed, so he intervenes directly. Standing 'in the midst' (*eis meson*) is an authoritative posture. His questions pressure Jesus to incriminate himself, since the external testimony has collapsed.
61. Jesus's silence fulfills Isaiah 53:7 ('He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth'). The high priest's question combines two titles: 'the Christ' (*ho Christos*) and 'the Son of the Blessed One' (*ho huios tou eulogētou*). 'The Blessed One' (*tou eulogētou*) is a Jewish circumlocution for God, avoiding direct use of the divine name. This is the central question of Mark's entire Gospel.
61. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 53:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
62. This is the climactic moment of Mark's Gospel. The 'messianic secret' — Jesus's persistent command to silence about his identity — is broken at the moment it will cost him his life. The response *Egō eimi* ('I am') is an unambiguous affirmation that also echoes the divine self-identification (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 43:10). Jesus then combines Psalm 110:1 ('seated at the right hand') with Daniel 7:13 ('coming with the clouds'), fusing messianic kingship with the divine Son of Man. 'Power' (*tēs dynamēōs*) is another circumlocution for God.
62. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalms 110:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
62. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 3:14. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
62. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 43:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
62. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
63. Tearing garments (*diarrēxas tous chitōnas*) was the prescribed response to hearing blasphemy (cf. Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:5). The high priest's action declares that Jesus's words constitute blasphemy — a capital offense. The irony is that the garment-tearing may itself violate priestly regulations (Leviticus 21:10), though this point is debated.
63. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 21:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
64. The Greek *blasphēmias* ('blasphemy') technically refers to speech that dishonors God. The high priest interprets Jesus's messianic claim as blasphemous — either because claiming to be the Messiah was not itself blasphemous (it was not), or because the additional claim to sit at God's right hand was seen as equating himself with God. The unanimous verdict — *pantes katekrinan* ('all condemned') — means no dissenting voice is recorded (though Luke 23:51 notes Joseph of Arimathea's dissent).
65. The abuse fulfills Isaiah 50:6 ('I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from disgrace and spitting'). The blindfolding and demand to 'prophesy' ('tell us who hit you') mocks his prophetic claims. The cruel irony: at this very moment, Jesus's prophecy about Peter (v. 30) is being fulfilled in the courtyard below.
65. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 50:6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
66. The word *katō* ('below') places Peter spatially beneath the room where Jesus is being tried — a physical detail with symbolic force. While Jesus stands before the council and speaks truth, Peter crouches below and lies. The challenger is a *paidiskē* ('servant girl') — the lowest-ranking person in the household, yet enough to break Peter's resolve.

67. The firelight that warms Peter also exposes him. The verb *emblemsasa* ('looked intently, fixed her gaze') suggests a careful, recognizing look. 'The Nazarene' (*tou Nazarēnou*) identifies Jesus by his hometown, which was considered insignificant (cf. John 1:46). The girl's statement is factual, not hostile — which makes Peter's reaction all the more revealing.
68. Peter's denial uses two verbs of non-knowledge: *oida* ('know') and *epistamai* ('understand'). The double denial is emphatic — he claims complete ignorance. Moving to the *proaulion* ('gateway, forecourt') is an attempt to distance himself from recognition. The rooster's first crow is the first warning, corresponding to Jesus's prediction of 'before the rooster crows twice' (v. 30). Some manuscripts omit the bracketed rooster crow here.
69. The Greek *hē paidiskē* ('the servant girl') with the article may indicate the same girl from verse 66, now broadening her accusation to the bystanders. The phrase *ex autōn* ('one of them') identifies Peter as part of Jesus's group — precisely the association he is trying to escape.
70. The imperfect *ērneito* ('he was denying, he kept denying') suggests ongoing, repeated denial. The bystanders identify Peter by his Galilean origin — Galilean Aramaic had a distinctive accent that was recognizable to Judeans (cf. Matthew 26:73). Peter's identity is written on his very speech, and no amount of denial can erase it.
71. The Greek *anathematizein* ('to invoke a curse, to place under anathema') means Peter calls down God's curse upon himself if he is lying — the strongest possible form of denial. The verb *omnynai* ('to swear an oath') adds a solemn oath to the curse. Peter refers to Jesus as 'this man' (*ton anthrōpon touton*) — refusing even to use his name. The escalation from simple denial (v. 68) to cursing and swearing (v. 71) traces Peter's descent.
72. The Greek *epibalōn eklaien* is difficult — *epibalōn* could mean 'having thrown himself down' (physical collapse), 'having set his mind on it' (reflection), or 'having begun' (bursting into tears). We render it 'broke down and wept,' which captures the emotional collapse. The imperfect *eklaien* ('he was weeping, he kept weeping') indicates sustained, ongoing grief — not a single outburst but a continuing flood of tears. Peter's story in Mark ends here in complete brokenness, with restoration implied only by the angel's specific mention of his name at the empty tomb (16:7).

15

Summary: *Mark 15 narrates the Roman trial, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. The chapter opens early in the morning as the Sanhedrin hands Jesus over to Pilate. After a brief interrogation, Pilate offers the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas; they choose Barabbas and demand crucifixion. Roman soldiers mock Jesus with a purple robe and crown of thorns. Simon of Cyrene is pressed into carrying the cross. Jesus is crucified at Golgotha between two rebels, mocked by passersby and religious leaders, and cries out in Aramaic, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' He dies with a loud cry, the temple curtain tears from top to bottom, and a Roman centurion declares, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' Women who followed Jesus from Galilee watch from a distance. Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus in a rock-hewn tomb.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The cry of dereliction (v. 34) — Jesus quoting Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic — is the most theologically disturbing utterance in the Gospels. Mark does not soften or explain it. The tearing of the temple curtain (v. 38) from top to bottom signals divine action opening access to God's presence. The centurion's confession (v. 39) is the first time in Mark that any human being calls Jesus 'Son of God' without being corrected or silenced — and it comes from a pagan executioner standing at the foot of the cross. The women named in verses 40-41 become the crucial witnesses who will connect the crucifixion to the empty tomb.*

Translation Friction: *The choice between Jesus and Barabbas involves a Passover release custom for which no extra-biblical evidence exists. Mark presents it as established practice; we render his account as given. The cry 'Eloi, Eloi' (v. 34) is Aramaic (Hebrew would be 'Eli, Eli' as in Matthew); the bystanders' confusion with Elijah may reflect genuine mishearing or may be Markan irony. The centurion's declaration can be translated 'the Son of God' or 'a son of God' — Greek lacks the indefinite article, and a Roman soldier might have meant 'a divine man' rather than making a Christian confession. The ambiguity may be intentional.*

Connections: *Psalm 22 pervades the chapter: the casting of lots for garments (v. 24; Ps 22:18), the mocking (vv. 29-32; Ps 22:7-8), and the cry of abandonment (v. 34; Ps 22:1). Isaiah 53 is present in Jesus's silence before accusers and his burial with the rich. The darkness at noon (v. 33) echoes Amos 8:9-10 ('I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight'). The torn curtain connects to the temple theme running through Mark 11-13.*

1As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. 2Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." 3The chief priests accused him of many things. 4Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer? See how

many charges they bring against you." ⁵But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. ⁶Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷A man called Barabbas was imprisoned with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹²Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³They shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified. ¹⁶The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷They put a purple cloak on him and, twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸And they began to salute him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹They struck his head with a reed and spit on him and knelt down in mock worship before him. ²⁰When they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. ²¹They compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country — the father of Alexander and Rufus — to carry his cross. ²²They brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull. ²³They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them to decide what each should take. ²⁵It was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶The inscription of the charge against him read: "The King of the Jews." ²⁷And with him they crucified two rebels, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸Those who passed by mocked him, shaking their heads and saying, "Ha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ²⁹Indeed, save thyself, and come down from the cross. ³⁰In the same way the chief priests also mocked him among themselves with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³¹Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ³²When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³³At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" — which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁴Some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Look, he is calling Elijah." ³⁵Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and held it up to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁶Then Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁷And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁸When the centurion who stood facing him saw that he breathed his last in this way, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God." ³⁹There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴⁰When he was in Galilee, they followed him and served him, and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. ⁴¹When evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴²Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴³Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him whether Jesus had already died. ⁴⁴When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁵He bought a linen shroud and, taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁶Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *prōi* ('early morning') likely refers to the fourth watch (3-6 AM). The verb *paredōkan* ('handed over') is again the *paradidōmi* chain: God hands over the Son, Judas hands over Jesus to the authorities, and now the authorities hand him over to Rome. Each use of this verb links divine purpose to human action. Pontius Pilate served as prefect of Judea from AD 26-36.
2. The charge has been reformulated for Roman ears: the Sanhedrin's religious charge ('Christ, Son of the Blessed One,' 14:61) becomes a political charge ('King of the Jews'). Jesus's response *sy legeis* ('you say so') is ambiguous — it can be read as affirmation, deflection, or ironic agreement. It neither confirms nor denies in a way Pilate can use.
3. The imperfect *katēgoroun* ('were accusing, kept accusing') indicates a sustained barrage of charges. Mark does not specify the content, focusing instead on volume — 'many things' (*polla*). The chief priests function as prosecutors before the Roman governor.

4. Pilate's surprise reveals that silence before a Roman tribunal was highly unusual — defendants typically mounted vigorous defenses. The word *posa* ('how many, how great') emphasizes the volume of accusations. Pilate seems to be giving Jesus an opportunity to defend himself.
5. The Greek *thaumazein* ('to be amazed, to marvel') indicates that Jesus's silence is extraordinary. Isaiah 53:7 provides the theological background: 'He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.' Jesus's silence is not passive but deliberate — a refusal to participate in a process whose outcome is already determined.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 53:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The imperfect *apelyen* ('he used to release') describes a recurring custom. No extra-biblical source confirms this practice, though Roman magistrates did sometimes grant amnesty. Mark presents it as an established Passover tradition — a feast celebrating liberation from bondage includes the liberation of a prisoner.
7. The name *Barabbas* (*bar-abba*) means 'son of the father' in Aramaic — an ironic contrast with Jesus, who is the Son of the Father. The *stasiastōn* ('rebels, insurrectionists') and *stasis* ('uprising, revolt') indicate that Barabbas was involved in armed political resistance against Rome. The crowd will choose the violent revolutionary over the peaceful messiah.
8. The crowd initiates the request — they come to Pilate expecting the customary release. The verb *anabas* ('having come up') suggests movement upward toward the praetorium. The crowd has not yet been prompted to choose between Jesus and Barabbas.
9. Pilate's use of the title 'King of the Jews' (*ton basilea tōn Ioudaiōn*) may be sarcastic, politically provocative, or an attempt to use popular support for Jesus to free him. The title will appear on the cross (v. 26), making the Roman charge visible to all.
10. The Greek *phthonon* ('envy, jealousy') is Pilate's assessment of the chief priests' motivation. Even a Roman governor could see that this was not about justice or theology but about threatened power. The verb *eginōsken* ('he knew, he perceived') implies ongoing awareness, not sudden insight.
11. The Greek *aneseisan* ('stirred up, incited, shook up') suggests active agitation. The chief priests work the crowd to ensure their preferred outcome. The people who shouted 'Hosanna' days earlier (11:9-10) are now manipulated into demanding the release of a murderer.
12. Pilate's question — 'What shall I do with...' — is extraordinary for a Roman governor. He defers the sentence to the mob, abdicating judicial responsibility. The phrase *hon legete* ('whom you call') distances Pilate from the title; he attributes it to the crowd rather than adopting it himself.
13. The Greek *staurōson* ('crucify!') is an aorist imperative — sharp, urgent, decisive. Crucifixion was Rome's penalty for slaves, rebels, and non-citizens. It was designed to be maximally painful and publicly humiliating. The crowd demands the most degrading form of execution available.
14. Pilate's question *ti gar epoiēsen kakon* ('what evil has he done?') implies he has found no basis for the death penalty. The adverb *perissōs* ('exceedingly, all the more') shows the crowd's intensity escalating beyond reason. The repetition of 'Crucify him!' without any stated crime reveals that this is a mob, not a judicial proceeding.
15. The Greek *hikanon poiēsai* ('to do what was sufficient, to satisfy') reveals Pilate's motivation as political expediency, not justice. The verb *phragellōsas* ('having flogged') refers to the Roman *flagellum* — a whip with leather thongs embedded with bone or metal fragments. Roman flogging was so severe it sometimes killed the victim. The *paradidōmi* chain reaches its final human link: Pilate hands Jesus over to execution.
16. The *praitōrion* was the governor's official residence — likely either Herod's palace on the western hill or the Antonia Fortress adjacent to the temple. The *speira* ('cohort, battalion') was normally 600 soldiers, though the word could be used loosely for a smaller detachment. Mark explains the term for his non-Palestinian readers.
17. The purple cloak (*porphyran*) mocks royal attire — purple was the color of kings and emperors, and the soldiers drape Jesus in a parody of royal investiture. The *akanthinon stephanon* ('crown of thorns') is fashioned from a thorny plant common in Palestine. Whether intended primarily to cause pain or to mock a radiate crown (like those on Roman coins) is debated; both functions were likely served.
18. The greeting *Chaire basileu tōn Ioudaiōn* ('Hail, King of the Jews!') parodies the salute to the emperor: 'Ave, Caesar!' (*Chaire, Kaisar*). The soldiers mock Jesus by performing a coronation ritual in reverse — clothing, crowning, and acclaiming him as king, but in contempt rather than honor.
19. The reed (*kalamō*) may have served as a mock scepter before being used to strike. The triad of actions — striking, spitting, kneeling — is a grotesque inversion of royal honor. The verb *prosekynoun* ('worshiped, bowed down to') is the word used for genuine worship throughout the New Testament. Mark's readers would see the irony: the soldiers' mockery accidentally performs the truth.
20. The return of Jesus's own garments means the crowd watching the crucifixion procession would not have seen the mockery. The shift from indoor abuse to outdoor execution transitions the narrative from the private world of soldiers' cruelty to the public spectacle of crucifixion.
21. The Greek *angareuousin* ('they compel, conscript, press into service') is a Persian loanword for forced labor under military authority. Simon was from Cyrene, a city in modern Libya with a large Jewish community. Mark identifies him as 'the father of Alexander and Rufus' — a detail that only makes sense if these men were known to Mark's audience, suggesting they became part of the early Christian community (cf. Romans 16:13, which mentions a Rufus). The cross (*stauros*) that Simon carried was the horizontal beam (*patibulum*); the vertical post remained fixed at the execution site.
22. *Golgotha* is the Aramaic *gulgulta* ('skull'). The Latin equivalent is *calvaria*, from which 'Calvary' derives. The name may describe the skull-like shape of the rocky outcrop or may refer to its use as an execution site. Mark translates the Aramaic for his Greek-speaking audience. The site was outside the city walls (cf. Hebrews 13:12).

- 23.** Wine mixed with myrrh (esmyrnismenon oionon) may have been offered as a mild narcotic to dull pain — a charitable practice attributed to Jerusalem's women in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a). Jesus's refusal to take it suggests a determination to face death with full consciousness. This may also fulfill his vow not to drink 'of the fruit of the vine' until the kingdom comes (14:25).
- 24.** Mark narrates the crucifixion itself with stark brevity — three words in Greek: kai staurousin auton ('and they crucify him'). No description of the physical process is given. The division of garments fulfills Psalm 22:18 ('They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots'), though Mark does not explicitly cite the psalm. A crucified person's possessions became the executioners' perquisite.
- 24.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 22:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 25.** The 'third hour' (hōra tritē) is approximately 9 AM by Jewish time-reckoning (counting from sunrise at approximately 6 AM). This creates a tension with John 19:14, which places Jesus still before Pilate at 'the sixth hour.' Various harmonization proposals exist; we render Mark's chronology as given.
- 26.** Roman practice required a titulus — a placard stating the condemned person's crime — to be carried before or attached to the cross. The charge ho basileus tōn Ioudaiōn ('The King of the Jews') is political rather than religious. From Pilate's perspective, Jesus was executed for sedition — claiming kingship in Caesar's domain. From Mark's perspective, the inscription is ironically true.
- 27.** The Greek lēstas ('rebels, bandits, insurrectionists') is the same word used in verse 48 and in 11:17. These were likely associates of Barabbas's insurrection (v. 7). The positioning — one on the right, one on the left — recalls James and John's request to sit at Jesus's right and left in his glory (10:37). Jesus told them they did not know what they were asking; the positions of honor in his 'glory' are occupied by criminals on crosses.
- 28.** Verse 28 is not included in the SBLGNT critical text. It appears in later manuscripts and quotes Isaiah 53:12 ('he was numbered with the transgressors'). While the quotation is theologically apt, the verse is almost certainly a later scribal addition influenced by Luke 22:37. We note its absence from the earliest and best manuscripts.
- 28.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 53:12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 29.** The head-shaking (kinountes tas kephalas) fulfills Psalm 22:7 ('All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads'). The Greek eblasphēmoun ('reviled, blasphemed') is the same word used for the charge against Jesus — those who accused him of blasphemy now commit it themselves. The temple accusation from 14:58 has become street mockery.
- 29.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 22:7. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 30.** The imperative sōson seauton ('save yourself!') is deeply ironic in light of 8:35 ('whoever wants to save their life will lose it'). The demand to 'come down from the cross' assumes that divine power should manifest as self-preservation. The entire Gospel has been arguing the opposite: divine power is revealed through self-giving suffering.
- 31.** The phrase allous esōsen ('he saved others') is an unintended confession of Jesus's healing ministry. The taunt heauton ou dynatai sōsai ('he cannot save himself') states the theological truth Mark's Gospel has been building: the Messiah saves precisely by not saving himself. The paradox of the cross — power through powerlessness — is articulated by Jesus's enemies without their understanding it.
- 32.** The demand 'that we may see and believe' (hina idōmen kai pisteusōmen) inverts the order Jesus requires: believing in order to see, not seeing in order to believe (cf. John 20:29). The title 'King of Israel' (basileus Israēl) is the Jewish form of the Roman charge 'King of the Jews.' Even the two co-crucified men join the mockery (synestaurōmenoi, 'those crucified with him') — in Mark, there is no penitent thief. Jesus is entirely alone.
- 33.** The sixth to ninth hours are approximately noon to 3 PM. Darkness at midday echoes Amos 8:9 ('I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight'). The phrase eph' holēn tēn gēn could mean 'over the whole land' (of Israel) or 'over the whole earth.' The darkness is cosmic and theological — creation itself responds to the death of its creator.
- 33.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Amos 8:9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 34.** This is Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic (Eloi is Aramaic; Matthew's Eli is Hebrew). The cry is the only saying from the cross that Mark records. Whether Jesus is expressing genuine experience of divine abandonment, praying the entire psalm (which moves from lament to trust and praise by its end), or both, has been debated throughout Christian history. Mark does not soften the cry or explain it. The theological reality is presented without commentary: the Son of God experiences forsakenness.
- 34.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 22:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 35.** The confusion between 'Eloi' (My God) and 'Elijah' (Ēlian) may be genuine mishearing — especially by non-Aramaic speakers — or may be deliberate Markan irony. Jewish tradition held that Elijah would appear before the messianic age (Malachi 4:5). The bystanders' interpretation reduces the most profound theological cry in the narrative to a misidentified name.
- 35.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Malachi 4:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 36.** The sour wine (oxous, 'vinegar') was the cheap wine (posca) commonly drunk by soldiers and laborers — not a cruelty but possibly an act of rough compassion. The sponge on a reed echoes Psalm 69:21 ('for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink'). The words 'let us see whether Elijah will come' may be mockery or genuine curiosity.

36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 69:21. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
37. The loud cry (phōnēn megalēn) before death is medically unusual — crucifixion typically ended in gradual asphyxiation, and the dying person would not have the strength for a loud shout. Mark may intend the cry to suggest that Jesus's death, though real, was not merely the result of physical exhaustion but a deliberate release. The Greek *exepneusen* ('breathed out, expired') is clinical and final.
38. The *katapetasma* ('curtain, veil') could refer to either the inner curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies), or the outer curtain visible from outside the temple. If the inner curtain, the tearing symbolizes direct access to God's presence; if the outer, it is a public sign visible to all. The direction 'from top to bottom' (ap' anōthen heōs katō) indicates divine action — God tears the curtain from heaven. The verb *eschisthē* ('was torn') uses the same root as the tearing of the heavens at Jesus's baptism (1:10, schizomenous), framing Jesus's ministry between two divine tearings.
39. The centurion (*kentyriōn*, a Latin loanword) is the first human being in Mark to call Jesus 'Son of God' (*huios theou*) without being rebuked or silenced. The messianic secret is finally broken — but by a pagan soldier at the foot of a cross, not by a disciple in a moment of glory. The Greek lacks the definite article: *huios theou* could mean 'the Son of God' or 'a son of God' ('a divine man'). Mark almost certainly intends the full Christian meaning, while acknowledging the centurion's limited understanding. What prompted this confession? Mark says it was seeing 'that he breathed his last in this way' (*hoti houtōs exepneusen*) — the manner of Jesus's death, not miracles or signs, revealed his identity.
40. The women are introduced for the first time in the narrative, yet they have been present all along (v. 41). Mark names three: Mary Magdalene (from Magdala, a town on the Sea of Galilee), Mary the mother of James and Joses (possibly Jesus's mother; cf. 6:3), and Salome (possibly the mother of James and John; cf. Matthew 27:56). These women become the crucial link between the crucifixion (they see where he dies), the burial (they see where he is laid, v. 47), and the empty tomb (they go to anoint him, 16:1).
41. The verbs *ēkolouthoun* ('they were following') and *diēkonoun* ('they were serving, ministering') are the same words used for discipleship throughout Mark. These women were disciples — following and serving Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. The imperfect tense indicates sustained, ongoing service. Mark reveals that Jesus's movement included a significant number of women disciples whose presence he had not previously mentioned.
42. The Greek *paraskeuē* ('Preparation') was the technical term for Friday, the day before the Sabbath, when work had to be completed before sunset. Mark explains the term for non-Jewish readers: 'the day before the Sabbath' (*prosabbaton*). The urgency is clear — burial must happen before sunset when Sabbath begins, and Jewish law prohibited leaving a body on a cross overnight (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).
42. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 21:22-23. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
43. Joseph is described as *euschēmōn bouleutēs* ('a respected/prominent council member') — meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin that had just condemned Jesus. The phrase *prosdēchomenos tēn basileian tou theou* ('waiting for the kingdom of God') identifies him as sympathetic to Jesus's message. The Greek *tolmēsas* ('having taken courage, having dared') reveals that his request required bravery — he was risking his social position and political standing by publicly associating with a condemned criminal.
44. Crucifixion victims typically survived for days. That Jesus died in approximately six hours surprised even Pilate, who verified the death through the centurion — an official confirmation. The Greek *ethaumasen* ('was surprised, wondered') and the word *palai* ('already, some time ago') indicate that rapid death was unusual.
45. The Greek *ptōma* ('corpse, fallen body') is a harsher word than *sōma* ('body'), emphasizing the physical reality of death. The verb *edōrēsato* ('granted, gave as a gift') indicates an official release — Roman practice sometimes denied burial to the executed, so Pilate's permission was not automatic.
46. The *sindōn* ('linen cloth, shroud') is the same word used for the young man's garment in 14:51-52 — a possible literary connection. Rock-hewn tombs with rolling stones were typical of wealthy families in first-century Jerusalem. Joseph's tomb fulfills Isaiah 53:9 ('his grave was with the rich in his death'). The stone (*lithon*) was a large disk-shaped rock rolled along a groove to seal the entrance — it would require significant effort to move.
46. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 53:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
47. The imperfect *etheōroun* ('they were watching, they were observing') indicates sustained attention — these women carefully noted the tomb's location. This detail is essential to the narrative: when they return on Sunday morning (16:1-2), they know exactly where to go. Their witness provides continuity between the crucifixion, burial, and empty tomb.

16

Summary: *Mark 16 narrates the discovery of the empty tomb and, in the longer ending, the appearances of the risen Jesus and his commission to the disciples. Early on the first day of the week, three women come to anoint Jesus's body. They find the stone rolled away, a young man in a white robe who announces that Jesus has risen, and the command to tell the disciples — especially Peter — that Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee. The original ending of Mark at verse 8 leaves the women fleeing in trembling and astonishment, saying nothing to anyone because they were afraid. The longer ending (verses 9-20) records appearances to Mary Magdalene, two disciples, and the eleven, followed by the Great Commission with signs accompanying believers, and Jesus's ascension.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *If Mark's Gospel originally ended at verse 8, it is one of the most daring conclusions in all literature — a story of good news that ends in silence and fear. The emptiness of the tomb is presented as evidence not through appearances or proofs but through absence. The young man's message (v. 7) specifically names Peter, the disciple who denied Jesus most shamefully — an implicit promise of restoration. The longer ending (vv. 9-20), though not from Mark's hand, became deeply influential in Christian practice and theology, particularly the commission to 'go into all the world' and the signs that accompany believers.*

Translation Friction: *The textual evidence is clear: Mark 16:9-20 does not appear in the two earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus), and early church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Origen) show no knowledge of it. Eusebius and Jerome both note its absence from the best manuscripts available to them. The vocabulary, style, and theology of vv. 9-20 differ markedly from the rest of Mark. However, the passage was widely known by the second century and became part of the received text. We include it with a textual note, as it has shaped Christian reading for centuries regardless of its origin.*

Connections: *The women's visit connects to 15:40, 47 (the same women who witnessed crucifixion and burial). The young man in white (v. 5) may connect to the young man who fled naked in 14:51-52 (now clothed). The message to 'go to Galilee' (v. 7) fulfills Jesus's promise in 14:28. The fear and silence of v. 8 contrasts with the Olivet Discourse command to 'stay awake' (13:37). The longer ending draws on traditions preserved in Luke 24, John 20, and early preaching summaries in Acts.*

¹When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. ²Very early on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back — for it was very large. ⁵Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶He said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. ⁹Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. ¹²After this he appeared in another form to two of them as they were walking into the country. ¹³They went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them either. ¹⁴Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸They will take up serpents. And if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick, then they will recover. ¹⁹So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The women waited until the Sabbath ended (Saturday evening) to purchase arōmata ('aromatic spices') for anointing the body — a task the anointing woman of 14:3-9 had already performed, though these women apparently did not know. The same three women from 15:40 maintain the chain of witness. Their intention to anoint presupposes they expect to find a dead body, not an empty tomb.
2. The Greek lian prōi ('very early') combined with anateilantos tou hēliou ('the sun having risen') places the visit at dawn on Sunday morning. The phrase tē mia tōn sabbatōn ('on the first of the sabbaths/week') uses the Semitic way of naming weekdays by counting from the Sabbath. This is the day Christians will later call 'the Lord's Day.'
3. The imperfect elegon ('they were saying') suggests an ongoing conversation during the walk. The stone (lithos) described in 15:46 was substantial — the women recognize they cannot move it themselves. Their practical concern reveals that they have no expectation of resurrection; they anticipate a sealed tomb containing a dead body.
4. The Greek anablepsasai ('having looked up') suggests the tomb was above them on a hillside, or that they lifted their eyes from the path. The passive apokeylistai ('had been rolled back') implies an agent without naming one — the passive of divine action. Mark adds the explanatory note 'for it was very large' (ēn gar megas sphodra), underscoring that human effort alone could not account for its removal.
5. The neaniskon ('young man') is the same word used in 14:51 for the man who fled naked at Jesus's arrest. If the connection is intentional, the one who fled in shame is now clothed in glory (stolēn leukēn, 'white robe') — a symbol of transformation. White robes are associated with heavenly beings throughout Jewish and Christian literature. The verb exethambēthēsan ('they were utterly alarmed, astonished') is the same strong word used for Jesus's distress in Gethsemane (14:33) — it denotes overwhelming emotion in the face of the numinous.
6. The announcement is structured in three parts: identification ('Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified'), proclamation ('he has been raised'), and evidence ('he is not here — see the place'). The passive ēgerthē ('he has been raised') attributes the resurrection to God's action — Jesus did not raise himself but was raised by the Father. The perfect participle ton estaurōmenon ('the crucified one') is significant: even risen, Jesus remains 'the crucified one.' The resurrection does not erase the crucifixion but vindicates the one who was crucified.
7. The specific mention of Peter — 'his disciples and Peter' (tois mathētais autou kai tō Petrō) — is unique to Mark and deeply significant. Peter, who denied Jesus three times, is singled out not for condemnation but for inclusion. The message assures him that his denial has not disqualified him from discipleship. The verb proagei ('he goes before you') fulfills 14:28 exactly. The phrase kathōs eipen hymin ('just as he told you') confirms that Jesus's predictions have been reliable throughout — his word is trustworthy.
8. If Mark's Gospel originally ended here, this is its final line. The Greek tromos ('trembling') and ekstasis ('astonishment, ecstasy, being beside oneself') describe the overwhelming response to a divine encounter. The double negative oudeni ouden ('nothing to no one, not a word to anyone') is emphatic. The final word — ephobounto gar ('for they were afraid') — is grammatically unusual (ending a book with the conjunction gar, 'for'), leading some to argue that the original ending was lost. Others argue that this abrupt, open ending is intentionally provocative: it leaves the reader to decide whether to be like the women (silent and afraid) or to proclaim what they have heard. The fear is not cowardice but numinous awe — the appropriate human response to the inbreaking of God.
9. TEXTUAL NOTE: Mark 16:9-20 (the 'Longer Ending') does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts, including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus (4th century). Eusebius and Jerome attest that it was absent from most Greek copies known to them. The vocabulary, style, and content differ notably from Mark 1:1-16:8. Most scholars conclude that these verses were added by a later hand to provide resurrection appearances and a commission that Mark's abrupt ending at verse 8 seemed to lack. The passage was widely known by the mid-second century and became part of the received text tradition. We include it as a significant part of the manuscript tradition while noting its secondary status.
9. The introduction of Mary Magdalene with the explanatory note about seven demons (hepta daimonia) reads as though she has not been mentioned before — a sign of a different author. The tradition of her encounter with the risen Jesus is also preserved in John 20:11-18.
10. The phrase tois met' autou genomenois ('those who had been with him') is an unusual circumlocution for the disciples, not characteristic of Mark's style. Their mourning (penthousi) and weeping (klaiousin) reflect their grief at Jesus's death and their ignorance of the resurrection.
11. The Greek ēpistēsan ('they disbelieved, they refused to believe') introduces a theme of disbelief that runs through the longer ending (cf. vv. 13, 14). This stands in some tension with Mark's earlier narrative, where the disciples' problem was more often misunderstanding than outright refusal to believe.
12. This is a compressed summary of the Emmaus road narrative found in Luke 24:13-35. The phrase en hetera morphē ('in another form') explains why the two did not recognize Jesus — a detail Luke develops at greater length. The Greek agron ('country, countryside, field') corresponds to Luke's village of Emmaus.
13. The pattern of testimony met with disbelief continues. The Greek tois loipois ('the rest, the remaining ones') refers to the other disciples. The repeated refusal to believe builds toward the rebuke in verse 14.
14. The appearance to 'the eleven' (tois hendeka) reflects Judas's absence. The Greek ōneidisen ('rebuked, reproached') is a strong word. The compound sklērokardian ('hardness of heart') echoes Mark 3:5, 6:52, 8:17, and 10:5 — a major Markan theme applied here with particular force. Even after multiple testimonies, the disciples refused to believe until confronted directly by the risen Jesus.

- 15.** The commission is universal in scope: *ton kosmon hapanta* ('the whole world') and *pasē tē ktisei* ('all creation'). The verb *kēryxate* ('proclaim, herald') is an aorist imperative — urgent and decisive. This parallels the commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and extends the gospel's reach beyond ethnic Israel to all humanity, and indeed to the created order itself.
- 16.** The pairing of faith (*pisteusas*) and baptism (*baptistheis*) reflects early Christian practice where conversion was expressed through baptism. Note that the second clause mentions only disbelief — not the absence of baptism — as the basis for condemnation (*katakristhēsetai*). The passage attributes salvation to faith expressed in baptism, and condemnation to the refusal of faith.
- 17.** The signs (*sēmeia*) listed here correspond to activities recorded in Acts: casting out demons (Acts 16:18), speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). The phrase *en tō onomati mou* ('in my name') indicates that these signs derive their power from Jesus's authority, not from the practitioners themselves. The Greek *glōssais kainais* ('new tongues') has been interpreted as both foreign languages and ecstatic speech.
- 18.** The handling of serpents corresponds to Paul's experience on Malta (Acts 28:3-6). Protection from poison has no direct parallel in Acts but reflects the broader theme of divine protection in the mission. Healing by laying on hands (*cheiras epithēsousin*) continues Jesus's own practice (Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23, 25). These signs are presented as accompaniments to mission, not as ends in themselves.
- 19.** The title *ho kyrios Iesous* ('the Lord Jesus') is not characteristic of Mark (who typically uses 'Jesus' alone) and reflects later Christian usage. The ascension (*anelēmphthē*, 'was taken up') is described more fully in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9-11. The phrase *ekathisen ek dexiōn tou theou* ('sat down at the right hand of God') fulfills Psalm 110:1, which Jesus quoted in 12:36 and 14:62. The 'right hand' denotes the position of supreme honor and co-regency.
- 19.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 110:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 20.** The final verse provides a summary of the apostolic mission. The Greek *synergountos* ('working together with') describes the Lord's ongoing partnership with the disciples in mission — he is not absent after the ascension but actively cooperating through signs. The verb *bebaiontos* ('confirming, establishing') indicates that the signs serve the word, not vice versa. The longer ending thus transforms Mark's story from an open, unsettling conclusion (v. 8) into a triumphant summary of the church's mission — a resolution that later generations clearly felt the Gospel needed.